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Belles Lettres



1946



Belles Lettres

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VOLUME TWELVE

NINETEEN FORTY-SIX

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FOREWORD

Basing the selections on standards previously set, we, the editors, present this, the twelfth annual volume of *Belles Lettres*.

DEATH

Eugene Tolson

When I fade far into the misty night
And take my place within the crimson ring,
I will not clutch for some despairing hope
To leave behind when I become a name.

There will not be a chain of love to break,
No one to moan my premature decay,
No flower to brighten up the sod
Above a shapeless clab of mouldering clay.

Thus I would wish my end to be
No awkward words or loud disturbing cry,
But in silence (with a low and mournful wind)
When I must die.

I only sojourned for a fleeting breath
And saw beside my path a mountain rose,
I paused in deepest reverence as I thought
How strong and straight it grows.

THREE THINGS TO KEEP A NATION FREE

Bert Lana

I know three things must always be
To keep a nation strong and free.
One is a hearth stone, bright and dear,
With busy, happy loved ones near.
One is a ready heart and hand
To love, and serve, and keep the land.
One is a worn and beaten way
To where the people go to pray.
So long as these are kept alive,
Nation and people will survive.
God, keep them always, everywhere,
The hearth, the flag, the place of prayer.

LAST NIGHT I TALKED TO YO-YO

Jim Litsey

Last night I had a long talk with Yo-Yo. Having never heard of Yo-Yo, quite naturally you are wondering what or whom I am talking about. Yo-Yo was born in Sonorra, New Mexico, where he was baptised Jose Gonzales. To us he was simply Yo-Yo. Yo-Yo was of Mexican ancestry, but he proudly proclaimed that he was a citizen of the United States. Oddly enough, I felt as if Yo-Yo was more deserving of the name American than any other fellow in the company, including myself. Many of us took our American heritage and citizenship for granted. Yo-Yo didn't. Yo-Yo felt that he owed his nation something for the privilege of being one of its citizens.

Yo-Yo and I went overseas together and fought side by side with the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment. Living together for twenty-four hours a day, Yo-Yo and I knew one another's habits, thoughts, feelings, and post-war ambitions. I could confide my troubles to Yo-Yo and he often revealed his to me. Although some people are not cognizant of the fact, and I was unaware of it at the time, the intimate banding together of men for long periods of time under trying conditions and their great dependence on each other leaves many with a feeling of closeness to other men. Sometime later, when Yo-Yo was killed, I realized that he had meant more to me than I believed.

The message from the War Department read something like this. "The War Department regrets to inform you that your son, PRIVATE JOSE GOLZALES, 37134110, was killed in action on the night of 5 April, 1945, at San Lorenzo, Italy, while operating with a routine patrol on Highway 65."

Today Yo-Yo is buried in United States Fifth Army Cemetery number 37. His resting place is marked by a little white cross on which is tacked his "dog tag," bearing his name and Army serial number.

Several times I have thought of Yo-Yo, but last night I talked to him. I should say Yo-Yo talked to me.

"Jim," he said, "what's the matter? What's going on in the world? Didn't the war settle things, or did it only confuse them even more?" He made a familiar gesture with his hand and continued. "Jim, you once told me about the things you were fighting for. What has happened to all of the ideals we once fought side by side for? The ones that I gave my life for? I would gladly do it all again,

even die again, if I was certain that the American way of life as we once knew it would survive."

I tried to speak but he continued.

"Why, oh, why can't the world get along? Must there always be trouble? Must there always be people stirring up trouble and looking for quarrels? It ain't fair, Jim! The world has peace again and they don't appreciate it. The United States won and got off easy, but they are messing up the detail just like the rest! They're too complacent—that's what—too smug. They won the war and now they are taking a siesta! It's just like I always said, Jim; if you snooze, you lose, and the world's sound asleep! The war we fought was supposedly to liberate the world. Now what are they up to—divide and conquer? It's up to you, Jim, and the rest of the right thinking people. Stop all this bickering and quarreling. Exert as much effort to keep peace as was expended in winning the war. Make lasting world peace a reality and war an impossibility! I have done all I can, Jim. It's up to you now.

"Well, so long, Jim. Don't forget Yo-Yo."

DESPAIR

Eugene Tolson

When I survey the little that I know,
A speck of knowledge on the world's broad face,
I blush with shame—I recede into myself,
A retarded member of a slowly moving race.

Much have I thought—much have I dreamed.
I dared to dream a dream serenely fair;
And all the while my life grew stale and lean
And groped the winding alleys of despair.

Thus I grow—I grow in years alone,
A frightened and a sorrow-ridden ghost,
A ghost of all I ever longed to be,
Of what I am—a thing forever lost.

All hope is gone! An empty space!
But yet I hold a wealth in memory,
For I met Esther on a long and lonely street;
She paused and I can swear she smiled at me.

SHE GOT HER MAN

Herbert Searcy

Miss Matilda lived alone in the old Perkins house on the top of Sycamore Hill. In their day, the Perkinses had owned practically all of the property in the village of Hardinville. Old Tom Perkins had died last year after having been in the care of Miss Matilda for twenty years. Being a dutiful father, he had left Matilda the old house in which she lived and all of his remaining savings—a few thousand dollars.

Now at the age of fifty, Miss Matilda was alone. She had a few friends. Persons she had known as a girl had either died or moved to the city. Hardinville no longer belonged to the Perkins family; defense factories now attracted hundreds of strangers to the once peaceful village.

The old house was going to ruin. Miss Matilda couldn't afford to repair the plumbing, install a new electric system, or paint the house. Even if she could have afforded it, she wouldn't have been able to find anyone to do it for her. Matilda wanted to keep the old house; she had grown to consider it as a human being. It was her only link with the past.

All of Hardinville was shocked when it was learned that Miss Matilda had a roomer. Jed Wilson, an inspector at the defense plant, had rented a room in the east wing. Before many weeks, the old house on Sycamore Hill appeared to have undergone a transformation. White paint glistened in the sunlight, shutters made dark green splotches against the white background, hedges and shrubs were carefully clipped.

A change had been noticed in Miss Matilda, too. Her gray hair was curled, her cheeks were brighter, and she looked ten years younger. She and Mr. Wilson could be seen driving through town each evening at dusk. At last, thought the people of Hardinville, Matilda Perkins has a man.

She did get her man. The whole village buzzed with excitement when details were published in the local paper one afternoon. Headlines reading "Elderly Woman Captures Enemy Agent" startled the townspeople. Later in an interview, Miss Matilda confessed that she had first become curious about the actions of her roomer when he suddenly insisted on painting the house late one afternoon, working until long after dark on the shutters. She had be-

come suspicious, then, the next night when she was alone in the house and happened to notice "a most peculiar thing"—some of the shutters had been hung the wrong way so that it was impossible to close them. On the open ones facing the street were tiny fluorescent swastikas.

Miss Matilda had sat and pondered this discovery and recalled that her roomer had lapsed occasionally into a guttural brogue. He had asked innumerable questions about the town, the main highways, even the little-known roads, and she remembered that he had driven with her down a lane on the other side of War Plant No. 2 and had asked her why there seemed to be few guards stationed near that road. She had explained, of course, that the lane led merely to an abandoned farmhouse. He had remarked, as if to himself, that the field beyond was smooth enough to be used as an airport. She had thought nothing about this at the time, but now Miss Matilda knew that she had a guest in the house—a very dangerous one—and she took her knowledge to the authorities.

Miss Matilda's nearsightedness had enabled her to get her man, for she was a person whose vision was accustomed to narrow spaces. The care of her father had caused her to concentrate on her limited horizon of home and nearby surroundings.

Officials of the Hardinville war plant sent Miss Matilda a substantial sum of money in gratitude for the services she had rendered to the country and her community, and she basked for days in the glory of being a local celebrity. At last reports, Miss Matilda had purchased a new pair of bifocals and was working on the swing shift at the plant she had saved from destruction by enemy agents.

FALSE APPEARANCE

Downie Case

Bare branches against a pale blue dome,
Hard, rigid, angular, as a Chinese painting.
Grotesque shapes they are, twisted, bent alone.
But—they are promising spring!

The sky is distant with fluffy clouds
And they are gliding by.
Now—nature is wearing a winter shroud.

TAR-BARREL BOOGIE

Philip Hodge

A little coal-black negro,
From his tennant-farm shack,
Sent by his mother
To play out of doors

Sits in the hot sun
At an upturned tar barrel
And beats with his heeled hands
A vein-filling rhythm.

The black little fellow
Shuts his dark eyes
And fits his dark lips
To a glossy smile;

He throws back his head
To the God that's the sun
And pounds out the rhythm
That heats from his heart.

The barrel is a long drum
For a spell-bound boy
And the steel at the end
Is a tight-stretched skin.

The rhythm flows,
The drummer sways,
His eyes half closed
Are filled with haze.

The world's ice cold—
The world's afire—
The world is gold
For a drummer's hire.

The world is small—
The world expands—
The world is a ball
In the drummer's hands.

The tempo slows;
The tar barrel's boom
Is stilled to silence
By the tired arms.

The dark little negro
With his leadened hands
Lies in the shade
Of a scale-barked pine.

HENRY

Frances Burns

I named him Henry after my girl friend's father, a fact which nearly brought my dad a libel suit. Mother hated the name because everytime she called Henry, the man next door answered. I suppose she wanted to call the dog Rover or Pal or some other common name. But Henry, the dog, had character. He was handsome, haughty, and wise. Besides, he was a red-head. He deserved the best name I could give him.

Henry was half chow and half otherwise. His tail was magnificent, and he knew it. When he felt like a big shot, which was most of the time, he arched his tail proudly over his back and paced importantly about his business. But the time the cat slapped his face, his tailed tucked itself between his legs until it tickled his chin.

A biography is never complete without a little of one's romantic nature included. Henry's love life was varied and vague, but if ever I saw a case of thwarted love it concerned the little dog next door. Dainty, beautiful, and completely feminine, she fell madly in love with Henry. Wistfully she followed him from tree to tree. She even let him eat out of her bowl. The other hopeful hounds hadn't a chance with her. But I doubt that she ever existed in Henry's busy world, for although his motto was, "Love 'em and leave 'em," he never once gave her a pleasant look. I was gravely concerned by the time we moved from the neighborhood, for she had pined away to a mere shadow. I did hope, and perhaps Henry did, too, that she someday would find a more appreciative canine cavalier to adore.

Daddy said Henry was a kleptomaniac, but I know he was just trying to give me gifts when he brought home old shoes, baseballs, and even rag dolls. But once I could hardly bring myself to defend his wayward habit. It was a warm summer day, and the flowers and bees were doing nicely when I became aware of a vile odor that became viler and viler. There pranced Henry looking as benevolent as John D. Rockefeller and twice as happy. He barked appealingly and dropped an object at my feet—a dead chicken, and dead a long, long time. Despite the current meat shortage, I could not rejoice over his gift. It was some time before Henry was desired within twenty feet of the house. He, of course, was deeply hurt by his forced solitude. ,

Henry has been dead for some time now, but he lives on in the family's heart as no other dog ever will. Even

yet I can see his eager face peering from the window as he waited each day for my return from school. His joyous bark echoes over every green hillside, and every cat in town misses the thrill of the chase.

He was just my dog—but what a dog!

TABLEAU

Philip Hodge

I look into a woodland pool,
So deep and clear and smooth and cool.
And what I see while gazing here
Is young and awful, knowing fear.
I see a baby, frail and distressed,
Sucking at the mottled breast.
I see a child, like growing grain,
There standing naked in the rain.
I see the small boy, hearty, fair,
Plucking dreams from fulsome air.
The pubic boy in blushes stands
Beside a young girl, clasping hands.
Torture tends at such a meeting;
Two hearts pulse in hurtful beating.
I see the youth; so pale he seems,
So fearful of his boyish dreams.
I see the young man's frightened eyes,
Afraid of truth, avoiding lies.
I see him flee into a wood,
Fearing evil, distrusting good.
The water in my mirroring lake
Begins to shudder, tremor, quake.
As waters pulse and shiver,
I see the young man's face a-quiver.
I, startled, see the image grow;
That troubled face too well I know!
I weep upon the imaged face;
The image weeps; our tears embrace.

A MOTHER'S WATCH

Bert Lana

She never closed her eyes in sleep
Till we were all in bed
On party nights till we came home
She often sat and read
We little thought about it then
When we were young and gay
How much our mother worried
When we children were away
We only knew she never slept
When we were out at night
And that she waited just to know
That we got home all right
And sometimes when we'd stay away
Till one, two or three
It seemed to us that mother heard
The turning of the key
For always when we'd step inside
She'd call and we'd reply
But we were far too young back then
To understand just why
Until the last one had returned
She always kept a light
For mother couldn't sleep until
She'd kissed us all goodnight
She had to know that we were safe
Before she went to rest
She seemed to fear the world might harm
The ones she loved the best
And then she said when you are grown
To women and to men
Perhaps I'll sleep the whole night through—
It may be different then
Then came the day when we were called
Together 'round the bed
The children are all with you now
The kindly doctor said
And in her eyes there gleamed again
That told us she'd be waiting
Just to know we'd be all right
She smiled the old familiar smile
And prayed to God to keep us safe from harm
 throughout the years
And then she went to sleep

A SPRING EVENING

Jean Cloyd

The clouds hang low in the deep blue sky,
Pillows for the dying sun.
How I hate to see it die,
For another day is done.

Through the silent sky a breeze darts in,
Covers for the earth at night.
Silver sparkles on her deep velvet skirt,
A glimmering, lovely sight.

The dew comes gently after night,
The ground grows damp and cool.
A maple shivers in delight
And smiles at herself in a pool.

I LIKE

Teena Osborne

I like lady bugs,
Fuzzy towels,
Neon lights,
Husky voices,
And cheese,
And pictures of seas.

Puppies, gay pinafores,
Clean white paper,
Black ink,
And trains.
Recordings by Tony Pasteur,
Perfumes,
And purple asters.

Picnics, dancing, wind in my hair—
But I think I like best—even more than the rest,
The wispering sounds of the night.

ALICE

Louise McCrosky

I had not noticed the girl before. She occupied a low, deep wicker chair; and I saw her in exact profile, like a figure in a tapestry, and as motionless. Then coming to the end of her reverie, she looked around and up. If I had not at first noticed her, I am certain that she, too, had been unaware of my presence until she actually looked and saw me.

The quickened upward movement of the heavy eyelids, the widening of the glance, passing into a fixed stare, put that beyond doubt. Under her amazement there was a hint of fear, and then came a flash of anger. Who was this creature who had dared to enter the garden?

Her hair did not look as though it had been touched since it had been put up several years ago; it was a mass of black, lustrous locks, twisted high on her head, with long untidy wisps hanging down on each side of her clear, sallow face; a mass so thick, strong and abundant that nothing but to look at it gave me a sensation of heavy pressure on the top of my head and an impression of magnificently cynical untidiness. She leaned forward, hugging herself with crossed legs; a dingy amber-colored, flounced wrapper of some thin material revealed the young supple body drawn together tensely in the deep, low seat, as if crouching for a spring. I detected a slight quivering or two start, which looked uncommonly like bounding away. They were followed by the most absolute immobility.

I spoke to her, but could not be certain that she understood me. She never raised her face nor attempted to look my way.

I kept on talking. She turned toward me. Her magnificent black eyes, narrowed, long in shape, swept over me with an indefinite expression; then in a harsh, contemptuous voice she let fall, "Why did you come here?"

VICISSITUDE

Philip Hodge

The sun
Brings all the world to day
Dispelling
Half the fears of night
And all its
Ecstasy

Thirteen

SUMMARY

Shirley Clouse

You're the lilacs in the mist;
You're the pansies in the dew—
Lovely you!

You're the kitten on the hearth;
You're a lacy valentine—
And you're mine!

You're the graceful woodland doe;
And there's gold dust in the air—
Near your hair.

But it grieves me to relate
That you're something of a bore—
And—you SNORE!

QUEST

Herman Oldham

There's always something leading me,
Whither I do not know.
Most men travel homeward;
I know not where I go.

West—East—South—North,
My home is never found.
I go on searching endlessly
Over many a foreign ground.

Miles and miles have I covered,
Many have I left behind,
In quest of that one Beauty
God put me here to find.

WHENCE

Juanita England

A giant sequoia,
A midget spruce,
A wild poppy,
A pampered lily,
A roaring ocean,
A babbling brook;
A nursemaid to all was
A droplet of rain!

WEST OF FRISCO BAY

Allan White

There's a patch of blue-green liquid
Just west of Frisco Bay;
A broad and briny patch of foam
That swallows up each day.

The poets sell its name in praise,
That it shares a god's devotion;
To me it's a stretch of blood and salt...
On the map they call it an ocean.

I've seen it so calm you'd think it glass,
A gigantic mirror that casts the sun
And reflects the stars from a sleepy sky...
Called priceless by more than one.

Priceless? Perhaps, as they may see,
But not as a jewel of the Lord;
For to me it's a rotten leach of flesh
That wails like a death-bent sword.

Priceless? True, with soul of man,
Engulfed by wind-swept commotion;
But for me it bears no peace of mind...
On the map they call it an ocean.

THE MISTAKE

Love Clarke

Jean had gone to bed early, suffering from a dreadful cold which made proper breathing difficult for her. She had gone out to eat dinner earlier in the evening, but the food had seemed tasteless and as usual when she had a cold, she could not smell anything.

The sounds of her coughing could be heard out in the hall, she was sure. She realized that she should have brought some cough medicine back from the drug store. Would she be able to sleep, she wondered, or would these spasms of coughing keep her awake all night?

The light was off in her room and she tried to lie in bed quietly so she would soon go to sleep. Still the coughing continued at intervals. Just at the time she thought she had stopped coughing, she would start again.

Someone knocked at the door and Jean promptly called, "Come in." There was enough light penetrating from the hall for her to see Mrs. Rains, the housemother, enter her room. Mrs. Rains was holding a small round bottle for her to see. Jean watched her step a few feet farther into the room, set the bottle down on a table, and walk quietly from the room.

Jean assumed that Mrs. Rains had heard her coughing and had brought some cough medicine for her. No other thought concerning the bottle entered her mind. She was still coughing, but she dreaded to take the medicine Mrs. Rains had brought in. She could not think of taking it without shuddering. She debated with herself for a long time on the question of getting up and taking the medicine. Jean kept putting it off, telling herself that she would get up and take a dose when her roommate came in. That was just an excuse for waiting a while longer to take the medicine.

Jean became very quiet again, and it was not long before she went to sleep. She slept well and did not wake up, even when her roommate came into the room.

The next morning she was awake but was coughing again as she had done the night before. Remembering the medicine Mrs. Rains had brought in, Jean walked over to the table and picked the bottle up. Her roommate was sitting there and she asked.

“When did Mrs. Rains bring my iodine back?”

Jean held the bottle up to the light and looked at it. She now realized the bottle did not contain cough syrup as she had supposed. Her voice did not reveal her thoughts. as she calmly replied, “She brought it in here last night.”

THE BLACKENED KEY

Juanita England

It is not dark and bare and ugly,
It is not an everlasting doom,
It is not a void or the wasted dreams of life,
Death is the key to an eternal day.
For when breathing beings cease to be
And dust unto dust returns,
The light of the soul will shine more clear.
Death is the key to an eternal day.

Life must halt its steps when death
Transforms weak flesh to nothingness.
One spark of hope forever upward spires
As weary souls approach their last reward:
Death is the key to an eternal day.

THE FARMER

Randy Stevens

As blackness of night gave way,
As streaks of gray adorned the horizon,
His shadowed form could be seen
In the morning dusk, for the corn
Was to be husked for the morning feeding.

Work was to be done before his wife
Arose to prepare breakfast.
Entering the barn filled with the scent of day hay
And harness saturated with sweat—
A smell so familiar to him.

Toil, drudgery marked the
Rising of his place;
His gnarled hands knew no rest,
His back, no peace,
For a farmer's work is never done.

The fields with their swaying greenness
Appealed to him as to no other.
By the sweat of his brow he had
Cared for them and produced a
Yield of which none could boast more.

His corn crib was full,
His mow overflowing,
His storage shed was replete.
None other could feel more
Satisfied with himself.

Though many are his heartaches,
Few his pleasures,
He knows he is self-made
And owes success to no man.

MY SON

Charles "Chuck" Miller

Dream, dream, dream, my little one,
While in thy slumber another day is done,
Dream of those things that made you gay;
The memories of you I will cherish unto this day.
Your life you have given was not for naught;
You have won for us what we had sought;
The path you climb is not very steep.
Dream, dream, dream, my son, when night has come.

Dream, dream, dream, my son, when night has come,
We at home are grateful for what you have won;
We hear your voice through wind and rain.
O, my son, your life was not in vain;
You and others will live on and on
In our hearts until the dawn.
We have the pleasures which you have reaped;
Dream, dream, dream, my son, in slumber sleep.
Dream, dream, dream, of your adventures gay

Let me share them with you until my day
Many of your friends who by the wayside fell
Good things of you they used to tell,
The girl whose life you made so gay,
Of love and memories she would often say
In my heart those memories will keep.
Dream, dream, dream, my dear, in slumber sleep.

Dream, dream, dream, my son, of sun's bright glow,
You made me happy long years ago
When as a child your ambitions brought
The life-long happiness which we had sought.
I knew the boy, your very best friend;
But one day, somehow, he knew it would end.
He mourned the memories he would always keep.
Dream, dream, dream, my son, in slumber sleep.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY

In speaking of a person's faults,
Pray don't forget your own;
Remember those with homes of glass
Should seldom throw a stone.
If we have nothing else to do
But talk of those that sin,
'Tis better we commence at home
And from that point begin.

We have no right to judge a man
Until he's fairly tried;
Should we not like his company
We know the world is wide.
Some may have faults—and who has not?
The old as well as young—
Perhaps we may, for aught we know,
Have fifty to their one.
I'll tell you of a better plan,
And find it works full well;
To try my own defects to cure
Before of others tell.
And though I sometimes hope to be
No worse than some I know,
My own shortcomings bid me let
The faults of others go.
Then let us all when we commence
To slander friend or foe,
Think of the harm one word would do
To those we little know.
Remember, curses sometimes, like
Our chickens, "roost at home."
Don't speak of others' faults until
You have none of your own.

RUTH

Eugene Tolson

I love her for her tender grace,

Her ample joy,

Her noble face.

I love her for her sincere thought,

Her feathered step,

Her measured talk.

A woman—yet, and far apart—

Apart—but still so near.

A throbbing pulse—a beating heart,

A smile, a human tear.

The whole of unreflected truth:

My world, my life, my love,MY RUTH.

THE WINDS FROM THE NORTH

Lois Reynolds

Twisted and broken the trees stand this morn,

Twisted and broken by winds from the North.

Snow drifted high from cellar to barn,

Snow drifted high by winds from the North.

Rafters in the barn shriek from the strain,

Barn rafters strained by winds from the North.

Icy fingers tear at frosted window panes,

Icy fingers tear; it's the wind from the North.

Pond in the back field frozen for skating,

Frozen for skating by winds from the North.

Winds we're enduring, but spring contemplating—

Winds we're enduring, the winds from the North.

I LOVED BO

Laura Hurt

It was the night before the homecoming football game on Saturday afternoon. The student body of Redwood College were crowded around a huge bonfire. Seven cheerful lassies were leading the well known yell,

We're with you team,
We're with you team,
We'll beat 'em, beat 'em, beat 'em!

Mae Longfellow was one of the attractive cheerleaders. All the students called her "Lonny," and she was quite a popular young lady. She was a typical brunette with long wavy hair. She was rather dark complexioned, because she still had the nice tan she had gotten at the seashore that summer. She was about five feet and two inches tall, and weighed about 104 pounds. Definitely she was the peppiest girl on the squad. She could bring yells from the bleachers when no one else could, and the team adored her.

While Lonny led cheers that night, her eyes were fixed upon Bo Martin, Redwood's star end. He was an All South-eastern Conference man, and all the girls thought he was handsome. I really suppose he would be considered handsome, because he was six feet tall, weighed 189 pounds, and had the most gorgeous red hair you've ever seen. He was a peculiar sort, though, because he had never given anyone a tumble. His fixed glance became even more noticeable when Bo was asked to make a short talk concerning the game. He made his way from the rear of the crowd up close to the fire. He cleared his throat and finally said, "I never could make speeches, but I can say we'll be fighting for that game tomorrow. The going will be plenty rough, and we'll be looking for your support by cheering." That was all he had to say, but just as he passed Lonny to go back to the boys, he winked. Did her heart flutter! She was so happy.

The pep rally was over at 8:00 o'clock, and the boys and girls retired to their dormitories to complete some last minute studying or do a last bit of preparing for the big game.

Twenty-two

"Do you really think he likes me?" asked Lonny.

"I do think you have a chance," said her roommate in reply.

The next morning Lonny felt as if she hadn't had a wink of sleep. Her eyes were swollen and her muscles ached, but she was happy regardless of the loss of sleep—Bo Martin had winked at her. Classes were met and it was only half an hour until time for the big game.

Lonny made her way to Redwood Stadium. It was a beautiful autumn day. The girls were strikingly attired in fall suits of different hues; some were wearing big white chrysanthemums tied with green ribbons while others were carrying pennants bearing the name of their dear old alma mater. Music could be heard from the college band. Oh! what a day for a homecoming ball game.

"Wake up," shouted a voice!

Just at that moment Lonny noticed she was standing in front of the cheerleader's bench, but her mind was in a daze. She hadn't even noticed that she was in the stadium.

Redwood and the opposing team were doing some calisthenics in which to get warmed up. The game announcer had just broadcast the starting line-up. Of course, to Lonny, there was only one man playing for Redwood that day, and that was Bo Martin.

Lin, the head cheerleader, had just announced a yell, and Lonny, still in a daze, found herself leading the cheer,

"HELLO * * * * * C. R. U.

Redwood says, hello."

Either the yell startled Lonny or the referee's whistle, but she began to realize that Redwood was playing a football game. It was the second quarter and neither team had scored.

Half-time came, the band performed, and the score remained 0—0. The field was cleared and both teams returned for the second half. Some were passing balls, others were trying to limber up their muscles. Each team had a determined look, as if to say, "We'll kill to win."

During the third quarter this thought was broken.

Twenty-three

Redwood's fans were all standing in the stadium. Something had gone wrong, the team was huddled around one player. Lonny's heart ached—was it Bo? Who could it be? She knew someone had been hurt very seriously, because there went the stretchers to the field. The player wearing jersey number 69 was placed on the stretchers. Yes, that was Bo's number—it was Bo! He was carried to the side-lines right near the stadium.

There were about three minutes left to play in the ball game. Lonny's eyes wandered back to the field. Redwood was attempting a field goal. The crowd roared, the conversion was good, and Redwood led 3—0.

With only seconds left to play in the ball game, Lonny's eyes wandered back to the lifeless figure on the stretcher. Bo had his eyes fixed on Lonny herself, she knew he did. Through his face, whitened with pain, flashed a faint smile. Tears of happiness welled up in Lonny's eyes. There was something in that smile she'd never hoped to see—a smile of tender, affectionate understanding and love that conveyed his message at a glance.

Instantly she felt the world crush around her when she felt a slight tap on the shoulder and heard these words from an attractive blonde sitting next to her. "I'm Mrs. Bo Martin; do you suppose it will be all right if I go see my husband?"



Belles Lettres



1947



Belles Lettres

An annual anthology of student writing sponsored and published by the
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VOLUME THIRTEEN

NINETEEN FORTY-SEVEN

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FOREWORD

We, the editors of the 1947 issue of *Belles Lettres*, present this the thirteenth volume, with the hope that it will afford pleasure to the readers and inspire them to creative writing.

PLEA TO THE ATOM

George Cecil

Potent, precious, petite particle,
Pulverising, parachuting power,
Penetrate perverted philosophies,
Play prelude to posterity!

NOX

Juanita England

Tiny, pink, pillow-clouds rested
On downy quilts of satin-blue sky.
While in the sleeping East
Angel feet make darkened tracks—
Bespeaking showers to come,
Heaven's airy floor to grace.

And thus I saw the night approaching,
The recompense for days of downheaded toil,
As nature's supreme creation—man—
Raises eyes of longing heavenward,
And searches out the golden ray of hope,
Therewith the morrow better to endure.

RADIO SOAP OPERAS

Norma Richards

What the world needs is not a "good five-cent cigar" but a sane, half-intellectual radio schedule. No wonder to-day's mothers are leaving home—it's that morning "Soap Opera" that does it.

Take, for example, my experience of last summer when windows were thrown high and city dwellers led not only their own lives but also their neighbors'.

All was quiet, the earth was sparkling in the morning brightness. Suddenly was heard a cheerful, happy voice breaking the silence with, "Do you wake up each morning? You do? How horrible! Try Dr. Snozzlepuss' No-Dozum, No Winkum Somnambulist Capsules and sleep the sleep of the dead. The chances are you'll never again waken. Buy the economy size of 12,000,000 at your corner drug store."

By the end of this "eye-opener" the whole neighborhood was out of bed, husbands sent off to work, and children settled for their morning's activities.

But wait—the best is yet to come. Early morning radio music is that which suits only the most cultured of tastes. One of the most symphonic groups is the group called the "Rattlesnake Mountain Melody Boys," featuring Aunt Surrey Piffle and Little Joe. The entire neighborhood is carried off into a semi-conscious state of nostalgia as the program comes to a yodeling end.

Now, 'tis time for drama. The first heart-warming, soul stirring opera is "Grandma's Other Stepson." This is a story of how a "sweet little woman" is robbed of a map that will lead to a buried treasure. As a result she must spend the rest of her life as a ward of the state.

Another story, even more heart-breaking, is the woeful tale of a young mountain girl who married a sly, handsome, young underworld character. The screams and violent sobs which tear at the tubes of the radio could lead only to a psychosis.

There is always a recipe program. Today's recipe is "Grandma's Delectable Loaf" or "Get Out the Bicarbonate, Mother, Grandma's at It Again." The concoction includes the stuffing of a weiner skin with carrots, onions, garlic, bread crumbs, and pineapple juice. Chill thoroughly (the loaf, not yourself) and serve only at the first sign of starvation.

After many more hours of the wonderful invention, called radio, there finally comes the hush that results from a broken tube. Settling back to calm your nerves, you at last have that peace and calm for which you have been longing.

WOULD IF I COULD

George Cecil

On the Dean's honor roll
I ain't—
I would
If I could
But I cain't
Get on the Dean's honor roll.

REFLECTIONS THROUGH SNOWFLAKES

Burna Dean Talbott

To have loved and lost surely could not be better than never to have loved at all. Anyone who had never lost would not have suffered the sharp emptiness of losing and the aftermath of loneliness which is crushing when that certain one is gone. When he is gone, gone are all the thrills of seeing new places and sights together; gone is the sparkling laughter of enjoying things with someone; gone is the pleasure of pondering over new interests and discoveries, and sympathizing and sorrowing over mutual griefs. Gone is everything except the dull constant pain of being alone and uncertain.

Marie's footfall crushed on the snow mat as she strolled aimlessly along the walk reflecting on the past. The downsweep of the snow against her hair and self seemed like the memories that were sweeping over her, drowning out the rest of the world and her own being, except that part which had been. Today was Bill's birthday. Perhaps the fact that this day was an occasion in his life had recalled to her mind this morning with deep depression what had once existed. One year ago on this special November day, when the world was full of sunshine and happiness, they had celebrated his birthday anniversary with light hearts, and how gay we were then, remembered Marie.

How different I am now, how changed. There is a sadness in my heart that will never be erased, and a maturity of emotion that lends years. Even my physical appearance has been altered. Proof enough is that friends have frequently remarked about a certain tired strain about the eyes and mouth.

Nothing is of interest now, neither clothes, nor parties, nor family events. All the things that once were paramount are oblivious to me. What matters is that Bill is not here with me, and that for the past month every day has been anxiety without him. The last hope of getting him back is gone. A month of waiting for a call is much too long to burn the flame of hope. Today I'll put it out, and realize that tomorrow, like today, will appear with its long hours and that my heart and mind will feel the same, unless—unless my mind can become the ruler of my emotions and future.

Some of the world's greatest accomplishments have been attained by those who sustained deep emotional wounds, only to heal them by power of mind and come back to reality through concentration on a new powerful interest. My goal will be such a determination.

There is some one, some place, or something that will become my means of forgetting. A happy life is not over for me. There is still time. So many years lie ahead for me. Seventeen really isn't very old.

SPRING

Chappie Fossett

The rippling brook
Which on the rocks did play
Exchanged its song
With breezes of the day.

The ghastly night
Dared not its face to show.
Upon the flowers
Lit with springtime's glow.

The chirping birds
At last have taken wing
To drive out winter
And receive the spring.

The nimble feet
Of children in their play
Resound the joy
That Spring has come this way.

UNFULFILLMENT

Ruby Monday

The gong sounds but no burning
spirit is summoned forth,
No thrilling heart leaps up at the
mentioning of a name,
The calmness, serenity, dense as
fog, encircles like a wreath,
And descends drawing closer the curtain
upon a heart that wants in vain.

The warm surge of a golden daydream
that ever fades at dusk,
Has vanished into the unknown
veil of misty perfume or sultry smoke.
No longer the spring awakens the
nearly budded flowerlet from its sleep;
The darkening winter comes, covering deeper
every strain of happiness that
Unfulfilled desires have not crushed.

AN INDIVIDUALIST

Betty Cooksey

Several people have described odd characters and have tried to explain the reason or reasons for such peculiarities. I know of a strange person, and I would like to hear someone's explanation of her queer actions.

I can't really describe Drusie because she is seldom seen. I'll do the next best thing and describe her living conditions. Drusie lives in a secluded little house that is tucked between two hills. It is not near a road; only a narrow path bordered by a tangled mass of briars and bushes and intermingled flowers leads to her home. Every kind of old-fashioned flower that you might name grows in the spacious old "paled-in" yard. The house has two small rooms and a "shedded-on" kitchen. It looks rather like many remote country houses—a gray, stained, weather-beaten frame that shows no signs of ever having been painted.

She has always lived in the same little house. I don't know how old she is, but you can get an idea from these facts. My information concerning her dates back fifty years. She was the oldest of several children. All except three of these have since married and died. Drusie lived with one of her unmarried brothers. After his death, the other brother, saying Drusie must not live alone, moved in with her. This brother, the youngest of the family, now draws an old-age pension.

People say that the little old woman in gray once had long, beautiful hair. No one could say much about that now because she always wears a dark bonnet that covers all her head except her face. Jerry, her brother, has said that Drusie must have at least ten yards of material to make a dress; she always wears grey percale gathered very full at the waist, falling around her shoes, having long full sleeves, and a high collar.

This oldest resident in the community is very reserved. In fact if you wanted to find out more about her, you would have to ask Jerry or one of the few other persons by whom she permits herself to be seen. If a stranger approaches the house, Drusie hides. If she should happen to be near the barn or in a field when she sees you coming, she runs into the barn or even behind a shock of fodder; otherwise she goes into the house. If she had some occasion to become acquainted with you, if you will sit down on the porch (by yourself, certainly not if you bring other people with you), she may, after a few minutes, come out of hiding and

talk with you in a much more reasonable way than you would expect.

Among other oddities of conduct, she keeps twine strings thickly laced and woven across the lower part of her windows to ward-off the witches. Some people say she does this because she had stomach trouble which she thought the witches caused.

As to her cooking, she prepares things that we today would not think about eating, for example dried pumpkin and pumpkin butter. In short, Drusie's living conditions have remained the same as those under which her mother lived. For years she has continued to do things just as her mother taught her to do them.

With all her odd ways Drusie might be said to have come out near the top in the contest for survival of the fittest. On second thought, maybe these queer methods are the key to the mystery of her ego.

BACKYARD OF A TENEMENT

Howard M. Rowlette

Eggs
Nakedly vacant,
Cracked dishes,
Orange rinds,
Coffee grounds swollen;
Coiled, spiral
Potato peels—
Dry tentacles.

Water
Stagnatedly scummed,
Blurred ink
On hand written envelopes,
With rags—
Vomits
From receptacles.

Mud
Sloshed boys
Flail at a mangy dog
As it shies past an island
Of horses' dung;
A consumptive
Spits phlegm
Amid a magazine's salad.

THEME NEUROSIS

Herbert W. Condor

Why should I work myself into a dither because I can't write a theme? What difference does it make? What does the professor think I am, a junior Tolstoy? Besides, I don't like being commanded to write when I'm not in the mood. I'm temperamental and dislike people with a commanding voice.

There goes that voice again, "Write a theme on feminine pulchritude." Gad, what a voice!

Write a theme
Ho hum

Feminine pulchritude! Ah, there's a lovely hunk of it sitting beside me. I look at my watch—

Tick tock
8:30 o'clock

Not much time for writing a theme but here goes. Suddenly my mind is distracted by a shapely pair of feminine legs that belong to the girl sitting beside me. Looks like John Powers material to me. Maybe I should ask her for a date tonight. Wait a minute! What's that on her left third finger? No, she can't be. More disappointments. Again, I look at my Elgin

Tick tock
8:35 o'clock

How can I possibly get this theme written by nine o'clock? I can't even think. Suddenly, a melodic pattern of poetical phrases strikes brain cell number one (only one). He's stinkin' from thinkin'—use Lifebuoy. Maybe I don't know myself. I haven't showered this morning, nor have I shaved. I'll wise-up and shower the second period—Lifebuoy and all.

A chiming of eight melodic notes is heard:

Are you think - ing
Are you think - ing

No doubt about it—8:45 A. M., fifteen minutes to go and no theme. Maybe I can get an idea from Janie's paper. She's a brain. "Psst, Janie, let me see your paper. I need an idea to give me the *go* on this theme." A voice bellows forth, "Each student will do his own work!" I look sheepishly at the professor, who is staring icily at me. The horrible thought of having been caught cheating seizes me. I feel as if the wrath of God is on me. My blood chills, my

Nine

hands shake—not only my hands, but I’m shaking all over. I’m doomed to be a failure.

The Bulova on Betty’s wrist attracts my attention and relieves some of the nervous strain.

8:50 o’clock

Give a Bulova, and you give the finest
(doesn’t rime, does it?)

Oh, college education, where art thou? I’m not stupid, but I’m not smart either. What am I?

Time marches on ———

Maybe the whistle will save me. No, it can only flunk me. I’m fighting desperately against (or for) time. Please, anybody, give me an idea for an introduction for this written masterpiece!

My head suddenly throbs; my mouth is cotton dry. I need a drink—a drink of water, that is. Maybe it was those three beers that threw me last night. Ah, I could certainly use one now. Maybe it would straighten me up. No, I’m lost, hopelessly lost.

8:55 o’clock

Five to go

Why does the prof keep staring at me? I’m not looking at the “brain’s” paper now. Only a cold, heartless person could stare like that. Doesn’t he know the agony I’m suffering. Please, sir, look at someone else, or pull your hat over your eyes! The latter idea is much better. Your double-breasted eyebrows always did annoy me.

Maybe the professor won’t ask for our paper today. Maybe he will give us another period in which to complete them. There I go, more wishful thinking. No teacher is human. They’re all mechanical creatures. What an effete profession!

Deliver me to Looeyville, Ky. Dean expells

8:59 o’clock

One minute till nine

Ideas, where are you? (Not you, Chloe; sit down.) There are voices, not ideas, in my brain today.

I’m not neurotic; I’m nuts, but aren’t we all?

TOOT! TOOT!

9 O’CLOCK

LIFE AND HELL

William C. Kearney

Life, a mystery, a dream,
A cloud of hate—wielded by nations;
Lightning, thunder—all man-made;
Death, destruction—where will it end?

No time to think—

No time to plan—

Live only for the day when life unfurls its flag of truce
And releases all its mysteries, its golden dreams.

All nations will then yield to the power of love—

A thing, now, so far beyond.

Fear, fear, an uncontrollable fear,
A fear of man, of man-made monsters;
A fear of life, a fear of death.

Courage!

What is courage? Where is courage?

Courage lurks under the cloak of fear.

The noise of battle, the sound of guns,
The cry of wounded, the sight of blood,

No time to think—

No time to plan—

Live, live, kill, kill—it is not the sound of men;

It's the sound of hell.

A hell on earth, indescribable;

Where Man is thrown against Man

And graves open wide their greedy mouths,

To receive the cruel, the kind,

The brave, the courageous, the coward.

Then the nights of silence, evil nights,

When man has time to think, to hope, to plan, to fear, to
pray.

Danger lurks on every side,

Thoughts are in his mind—

Home, solitude, security,

Peace, peace, peace,

A chance at life—

Life, that beautiful dream.

Then a burst, another burst of hell,

The screams, the cries, the walking dead,

The noise, the battle.

Then, like a message from heaven—
IT'S OVER !! It's over—
The sound of drums, marching feet,
Music, cheering crowds,
The tears of joy.

“Yes, my son, it's over—
You may return home, return to your dreams, your hopes—
Cast away the memories of this hell on earth—
Live again, live forever,
Under the wings of Peace.
Forget, forget,
Forget what you've seen, heard and felt.”
No, no don't forget, don't ever forget—you can't forget.
Keep alive the memory of those who lie now in foreign
fields.
Keep alive the memory of all you've seen, of all you've heard,
Of all you've thought, and all you've felt.
Instill, in your children, and your children's children,
The hell of hells, so they may live and be free.

Courage lurks under the cloak of fear;
Yes, fear of what you've seen,
Of what you know.
Always remember, so you may have courage
To uphold the peace to follow.

My dreams are of tomorrow—
Of a world at peace;
Of streets crowded with people,
Each with his own separate dreams.
Individual lives, happiness—
With the cares and burdens of war
Lifted from their shoulders;
Peaceful people, loving people;
People who enjoy living.
Tomorrow, my dreams will come true—
My dreams of peaceful life.

DRAGON-FLY

Howard M. Rowlette

Somber dullness, wings, tiffany thin,
Stretched taut on ebon web-like frames.
Grey-green to taupe of opalescence.
Streaks, dips, pauses, and is gone.

A MODERN SONG

Billy Brashear

Songs of this modern age have many effects. They offer various members of our population chances to make money, chances to spend money. They offer romance, humor, conversation, subjects for themes, and they even have ramifications in the diplomatic world. No different from other popular songs in these effects is "Open the Door, Richard." We will discuss all the facets of its effect on our country and people which come to mind.

This song is very aptly titled, for by committing the title to memory, one can learn almost the entire song. This song differs very little from other modern ballads. It uses simple words to tell a simple story. An average US citizen comes home in the early morning hours and discovers that through some error his roommate, Richard, has taken the only key to their apartment inside and locked the door. The rest of the story is devoted to his efforts to awaken Richard and get to bed. As stated before, the story is not at all unusual, but the music and lyric writers have so captured the pathos and worry of the little man in the US that the song has appealed universally to our nation. As this song has the merits of most of the Hit Parade ditties of the day it is very well adapted to a discussion of this type. It cannot be stressed too much how all pervading is the knowledge of this song. Ignorant indeed is the man who has not heard of Poor Richard and his Closed Door Policy.

The economic results of the song are widespread. The authors will make many thousands of dollars from its sale and playing rights on the radio. The orchestra with the favorite recording will find itself famous and much in demand in addition to the royalties it will reap from the records. Probably carpenters have shown high profits from doors broken by wits imitating Richard's roommate. Strikes have been called because Richard was banned from radio stations, resulting in loss of time and money. From these and other pyramiding results, such as the lumber industry furnishing lumber to the carpenters for doors, the eventual cost of getting the door open for Richard's roommate will doubtless run into the millions.

Romance, too, has been and will be given a boost by Richard. Coy maidens will no longer have to sing, "Who's that knocking at my door?" but will be able to shout, "Open the door, Blank," filling in the blank with the name of their choosing. This will enable them to give direct hints to the man of their choice. Lovers keeping a rendezvous will know what has happened if the door is locked and the

key is gone. The romance facet of the song's effect may live down through the centuries until its origin is lost in some myth such as: Richard and Elvira were lovers. One day while knocking on the door of Richard's home Elvira noticed blood seeping under the door. She tried the door; the door was locked. Beating on the door, she gave the haunting, beseeching cry of "Open the door, Richard." Richard could not hear her, though, for despairing of ever getting their family's permission to marry, he had committed suicide by sticking his head in the electric mixer. Always since then, "Open the door, Richard" has been the call of one lover to another.

Humorous and conversational effects of Richard go hand in hand. First our hero crept into conversation as a matter of news interest. People wanted to know if Richard had opened the door and the greeting of the day was, "Has Richard opened up yet?" Then as it became evident that Richard was not going to open up, the more cynical began to make puns and detracting aspersions about Richard. Some even went so far as to say that Richard was actually standing at the door but refused to open it because he was a publicity hound. In this way humor crept into the existence of Richard. After the delicacy surrounding Richard had been removed, some of the more modern and daring of the radio comedians began to build situations on their shows which would enable them to say something clever such as, "My door is always open to you, Richard." Thus a composition which had at first struck to the heart of every American became even more lethal. Pending is publication of a joke book. The title, supposed to be funny in itself, is "The Open Door to Richard's Humor." As the reviews promise, this will probably kill you.

In this atomic age Richard can even have scientific significance. Constantly circulating rumors have it that there is danger of a chain reaction by Richard. The authors are threatening to write a sequel to be called "Come On In, The Key Is in the Lock." If they succeed with this, the series might become perpetuating, and Richard would become an institution not unlike the crossword puzzles or Terry and the Pirates. Each newspaper of worth would have its daily episode of Richard.

Richard has also been active in the field of foreign affairs. *Izvestia* is still writing articles criticizing "Lift the Curtain, Joseph," a parody which appeared in one of the political columns. Also the commiserations and advice which have poured in to Richard's roommate from all over the world have done much toward the spreading of good will among the people of the world. The International Safe-

crackers Union has offered to open the door and agreed to give him on-the-job training as a safecracker.

So Richard wanders on and on, and who can say where he will stop? The only foreseeable obstacle to his progress is a door.

HAPPINESS

Juanita England

The great, the small
One thing only are seeking,
As in their bustling day
From "this" to "that" they flit.

Tomorrow, or surely the day after,
My goal I shall reach.
So say they of little thought,
Always seeking, without knowing what!

It isn't power, or wealth,
Love and bounty also may elude
That which men pursue in darkness,
Faltering, calling for IT.

Foolish, blind, pitiable are they
Who dumbly labor uselessly on and on,
Never knowing that trampled in the dust
Beneath unheeding feet lies IT.

SPRING MORNING MEDLEY

George Cecil

Small birds react cheerfully to vivid
dawning,
While alarm clocks provoke lethargic
sleepyheads to yawning.

DREAM TIME

Chappie Fossett

After the noise of the day is past,
After each task is through,
When the calm of the night appears at last
My thoughts always turn to you.

Sometimes, during the rush of the day,
I steal a dream or two,
But when the moon seeks its starlit way,
That's when I dream of you.

I need the still calm peace of night
To live, once more, anew,
The darkness that was turned to light
With just a smile from you.

The moonlight streaks across the floor,
The walls reflect the blue,
And I am dreaming dreams once more—
Dreams of only you.

I WILL REMEMBER, SPRING!

Howard M. Rowlette

When winter comes
With swirling robes of snow
And powders all the land,
I will forget, each golden,
Autumn thing;
As next is Spring . . .!
The golden-reds no more
Are on the hills.
There's naught behind
Of Autumn's bright array.
It's then, that I'll remember
Daffodils, more sparkling
Than the glint of golden hills.
And . . . as the summer fades
Away, the green grass parched,
It's then I will remember, May,
To dream of tulips
And the narcissus' gentle glow.
For I will remember, Spring.

LA CORTA

Richard C. Cullen

After much bartering with the tribe of natives at the village, we finally managed to obtain two small flat-bottom boats, and as we rowed along through the dark, stagnant water my mind drifted back over the day's happenings.

It was strange, yes, strange indeed. I mean about the way the natives' faces seemed to twist into a mask of fear when we mentioned La Corta. I didn't know very much about the superstitions that for years had circulated around these jungle forests, but the stories or tales did seem to have a profound effect upon these simple inhabitants. More likely, they were witch doctors' tales, invented to keep a firm hold on the natives. Nevertheless, the story seemed to grip their minds.

We row on and on. The vegetation seems to be getting thicker on the sides of the banks now. This water is ghastly looking. The red mud of the banks and river bottom has mixed with the water and as a result it seems to be almost the color of dried blood. Vines are hanging down, and trail into the stream, from the thick, almost impenetrable forests that surround us. Vaporious mists that seem to float over the surface of the water part as our small craft moves on.

"La Corta." The name even sounds intriguing. To think that Hernando Cortez had built the old castle over five hundred years ago. Legend has it that he planned to build a great empire here. The castle itself had been finished, true enough, but then something happened. Cortez returned from the mainland to find all the members of his great construction party murdered, their bodies mutilated—No. I can't even bring my well-ordered, logical mind to think about it. More tales, more superstitions. But it does seem as though the gods had put a curse upon the place, for the explorer abandoned the project, never to return. Now, centuries after, the natives still fear the place as they fear the devil himself.

Our boat continues its movement upstream. The sun is directly overhead now, and as it breaks through the patches of foliage, spears of light come down from above and cast reflections in the water. We should reach the place shortly. According to our charts it should lie about two more miles up stream. Our geological equipment and several cameras take up most of the room in the boat, and my legs become cramped from lack of space to move around.

But I can't keep the tale out of my mind. I laugh to myself. Just imagine what my colleagues would say if they

knew the thoughts running through my mind. I attempt to dismiss them, for we are nearing the castle now. The forest is beginning to thin out. I hope we can pick up our rock samples and be back to the village by nightfall. For some unknown reason, the idea of spending the night at the castle has little appeal.

Even now the peaked spires of the structure can be seen. We round the last group of trees to the right, and there it is — La Corta — with all its aged majesty. The massive stones themselves seem to represent never-ending time. The green forests end abruptly about a hundred yards from each side of the castle, and it stands there alone in the clearing.

We beach our small craft and make a temporary camp quickly, as it is beginning to cloud up. These tropical storms can come up almost without one's noticing them.

After picking out our needed equipment, we advance toward a small garden that lies along the edge of one of the main walls. In the center of the garden stands a statue of Apollo, a superb work of art done in white marble. I can't help thinking of all the hundreds of years the statue has stood in that position and will be standing for years to come until erosion and other forces of nature melt it down into nothingness.

We pass through a tunnel-like archway that leads into the castle itself. Moisture drips slowly, drop after countless drop, from the sides of the tunnel. The dampness of the place and the darkening skies seem to cast a spell of ominous tidings over all of us. Again the feeling comes to me: "Go back, go back before it's too late"; but I put it from my mind.

The castle is divided into several great halls. Vines crawl up the sides of the walls like some creeping animal. They cling to almost every exposed part of stone. After examining the uppermost sections of the structure and taking several photographs, we return to the main floor whence we had come. The main floor resembles the other in the fact that it has the same large halls and rooms constructed in approximately the same way. We pick our way slowly, examining the rooms as we go and being careful not to stumble or become entangled in the maze of sticky vines.

The dungeons must lie down below, through the rustic-looking catacombs that descend from the main room of the first floor. It is suggested that we follow them down. But something tells us not to, for we hesitate. I can see the other two members of my party becoming nervous also.

Eighteen

It is becoming quite late, and since we have obtained photographs of the castle and its surroundings and also some needed geological specimens, we decide to return to the boat and be gone from this place as soon as possible. None of us relishes the idea of spending the night here.

Suddenly the heavens seem to split apart and torrents of rain begin to pour down. Lightning and thunder wail and scream at us as if to say, "Intruders! You have desecrated the silence of this place! You should have gone long ago but now you must stay!"

We make our way into the main hall, deciding it will be the driest place in which to spend the night. It is really beginning to get dark now. The rain beats against the top and sides of the castle, sending sheets of water down the huge walls.

We have luckily brought along extra rations for an emergency such as this, so we busy ourselves with building a small fire over which to cook our food. After eating and fixing temporary beds in the center of the great hall, we discuss what we shall do the following day.

It is now becoming quite late, and, being weary, we all lie down. The rain has stopped and a misty steam begins to rise from the ground as it does in the tropics after a rain. The moon comes out and an evil light settles over us from great openings in the walls. I feel a reluctance to go to sleep in surroundings such as these, but finally I doze off.

Suddenly I am aroused by a blood-curdling, half-mad scream that causes me to sit bolt upright. My God! What is it? I look over to my companions, and they are gone! I peer over in the direction of the entrance to the dungeons, and then I see it—a great hulk, beast or unholy devil, I know not, but there it stands. I am so paralyzed with fear that I cannot move. There is a struggle, the monster is grappling with something. Suddenly, with a great heave, a lifeless shape is flung toward me. It is a human body although it cannot be recognized as such, as I look upon it. God, no, no! The head is is—

I gaze once more toward the entrance of the dungeon. The shape is still there. It seems to glow from some luminous light within its body. Those eyes seem like points of fire! And the great, long, gangling hair—No! I cannot bear to look more. My only thought, as life begins to come back to me, is to flee. If God will only spare me!

I dash madly from the hall. My legs are torn from the underbrush that seems to take hold of me as I try to

run. I half crawl out into the garden surrounding the castle wall and fall heavily into a muddy pool. I must hide here, for my tortured body refuses to move farther. The night air becomes thick with the oppressive smell of decayed vegetation. It seems that each breath of air brings with it new and unknown horrors. The night with all its shadows lurks in every mire and stagnant abyss. I must be going mad. Surely this horrible nightmare could not be happening to me.

I must have lain in this half-sunken pool for hours—days, it seems. Will the morning never come?

The “Thing,” I am sure, is only waiting the opportunity to snuff out my life as it had done the others’. I could hear their pitiful screams now—screams of sheer agony and horror at the sight of the monster.

My mind is slowly beginning to come back upon its normal plane. This senseless beast, if it is a beast, is nothing but a bulk of bone and sinew. It had no God-given brain. I shall outsmart it. Cold perspiration again covers my body. Half paralyzed with fear, I try to pull myself up to drier ground. Should I dare raise my head? The rim of the pool in which I lie is only a few inches above me. If the “Thing” should catch even a glimpse of me, my end would come even quicker than that of the rest, for I am indeed the last victim.

I hear a noise over there to the left. If I must die, I beg that it be quick. I can not bear to have that thing—Wait! Was I imagining again? Certainly there is no sound now, only darkness. My hands take hold of firmer ground. Inch by inch I pull myself up. I can see the outline of the statue of Apollo in the garden. I even remember how we had admired it only a few hours before. If we had only decided to return to the village regardless of rain. Better to be drowned in a flooded stream than this. But now all hope is gone, gone! I sob to myself. I feel that I am losing consciousness, but I fight to regain my senses.

A few feet from the statue near the doomed entrance to this garden, I see a shape standing. This is it, then. I am not to be spared. This is my end. The “Monster” advances toward me on all fours. Its long, almost human-like hair, clotted with blood, hangs down over its eyes. It seems half to smirk, half to scream and whine as it approaches. The mouth is slowly opening. Its red-forked tongue shoots out at intervals, like some demonlike serpent. I try to run.

No! No! Take it away. I am screaming, screaming. I can feel the inhuman claws tearing into my flesh. As

my head is tilted forward from the weight of the beast clinging to my back, I can see my blood seeping stickily over my chest. Now the long tangled hair of the monster is closing down over my face, shutting off my breath, shutting out my life. This is the end then, the end!

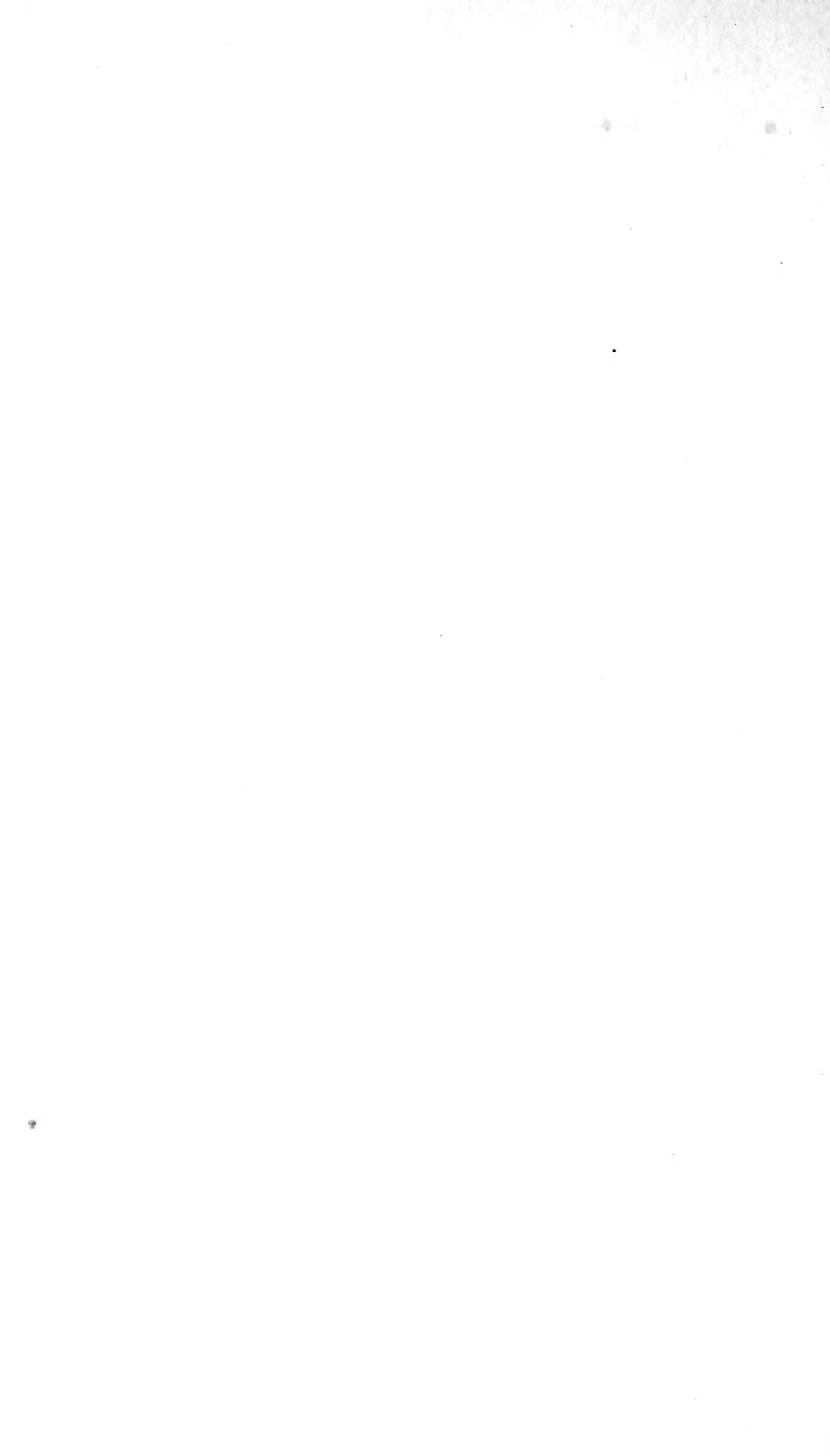
My body is all atingle—especially my scalp—as I await the blow. A feeling of surprise follows the delay, however, and gradually my ears distinguish a slight noise near me. I reach out my hand and touch one of my snoring companions.

SEA OF DARKNESS

Allan B. Pennington

This evening the guns are silent, like tired watchdogs reclining beneath shade trees. A lull smothers the ship as activities are muted from bow to stern; meanwhile the black shadow plows its way through a sea of fluorescent animalcule, a Milky Way of brine. On the flight deck the planes are secured to chrome cleats; the ready-plane squatting on the tracks of a catapult, a killer whale of the air, in preparation for tomorrow's patrol. In other sections of the carrier crewmen on duty noiselessly labor at tasks that inject life into a hulk of steel, tending boilers, checking planes, awaiting the morning. A ceaseless pace that ends only when the sailor is in ports of sleep.

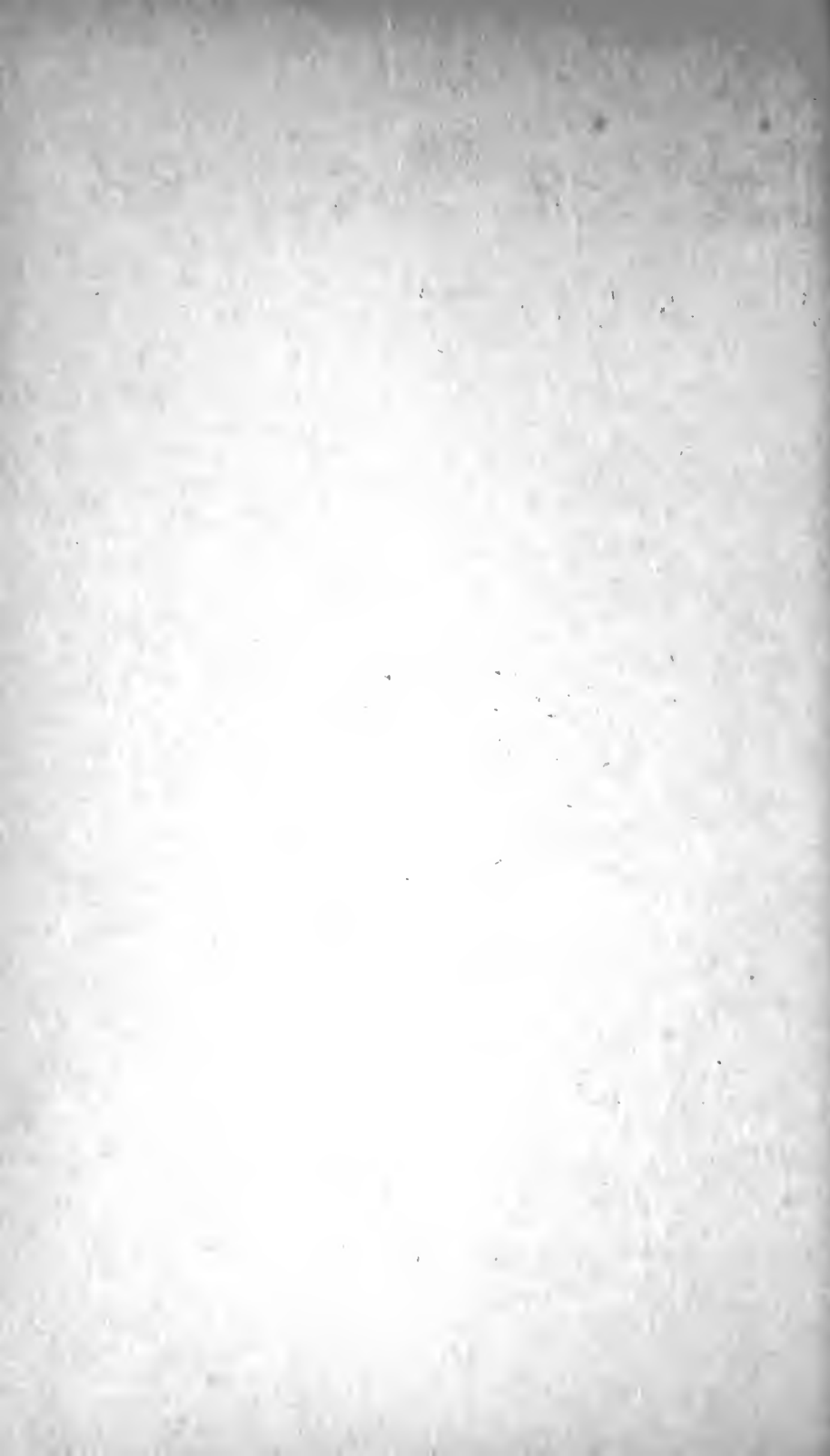
The vessel overtakes midnight—relieve the watch—gloomy words that send drowsy seamen stumbling through darkened passageways, bumping into bulkheads, and clambering up steel ladders to gun mount and engine room; ten minutes of bustle preceding the somber hours of the "mid-watch." A gunner yawns while training his weapon into the empty sky. From the loneliness of the windswept mast a lookout sighs for a cigarette, as his eyes scan the horizon in search of the feathery path of a submarine. The night is devoid of life; only spectral shadows steer the craft, shades guided by luminary dials that glow in the shack-like bridge. From its gaff the nervous ensign flutters in the trade winds. The living quarters are lost in the dreams of weary men, the silence of slumber punctuated by rasping snores and the aching mutters of home through a lonely sailor's fitful dreams; only the blue rays of a battle lamp flicker in a corner of the compartment. Darkness is on the sea.



Belles Lettres



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FOREWORD

We, the Editors of the fourteenth annual volume of *Belles Lettres*, present this to our fellow students and readers. We have sought to please and to inspire others by endeavoring to include the best of all types of creative writing and by using the work of as many students as possible. Foremost, we have tried to uphold the standards of those before us.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SONG

Laura Virginia Roberts

The most beautiful song that I know
Is the song of the river gliding by
When the night is old,
And only I
Am there to hear.

The most beautiful poem that I have heard
Is that whispering wind in the lilac tree,
When the night is calm
And none but me
Is there to hear.

The loveliest song that I know
Is the voice of you when you spoke to me
When our love was new
And only we
Were there to hear.

The most beautiful song will ever sing
In the melody of the lilac tree
And the river, too,
But just for me;
You will not hear.

DANDELIONS

Edwin Carter

We looked at the dandelions
on the grass
gold coins scattered
by a prodigal hand

Then I thought
what is time
what will become of this little moment

Who will look at the dandelions
who will see
the yellow circles
on the green of our graves

The PIPE

Aldene Porter Lovitt

After he had retrieved his suitcase from the baggage agent, Henry Barrows walked slowly away from the railroad depot. The suitcase was a new one and very shiny, with none of the scuffs and scars of a suitcase that knows its way around. Henry smiled wryly, remembering the doctor's words: "Now here's the prescription, my boy. A complete change—new clothes, new surroundings, and a completely new outlook on life. Those headaches of yours are just a manifestation of your confused state of mind. If you'll go away from this town and all its memories, it won't be too long until you'll be able to look at this whole tragic incident objectively. New friends and new interests, that's what you need."

Walking along, Henry remembered how the sun had shone through the windows of the comfortable, friendly office. Now the rays of the sun striking the strange pavement seemed to leer at him, alone in this strange, big, overpowering city. But the comfortable small town was no longer friendly to him, for all the people knew, and although they pitied him, they looked at him with an uneasy look in their eyes. When Henry met their uncomfortable gaze, he knew he had to leave.

So Henry found a fairly good position with a publishing company, and settled himself in a tiny apartment in one of the many large apartment houses. In order to meet the new friends the doctor had prescribed, he enrolled for some night classes at the university.

The headaches became less frequent, and everything went well for a time. Henry began to hope that things would be all right. Then one night he had the dream again. He saw it all just as it had been—his father's body, with the ugly bullet wound in his head, lying on the living-room floor. And he saw the people watching him, as he walked along the street, and heard their whispers: "That's Judge Barrow's son. Wasn't it a shame about the judge killing himself. But you know they always said " But most terrifying of all was the look he saw in their eyes. In the dream the look became more intense, until the people's bodies faded away, and there was nothing left but the eyes, staring at him, and the look getting worse and worse and he was running and running and getting nowhere

Henry knew something had awakened him from the dream. Trembling, he snapped on the light and reached for a cigarette. Then he heard it—the noise of the pipes which conducted the heat through the building. Since it had gotten much colder, the sudden heat coming through the pipes

was causing them to bang and crack. He hadn't noticed it before, but there was a large heat pipe directly over his bed.

After he had turned the light off, Henry lay in the dark, thinking. The banging of the pipe began to take on a rhythmical quality. Three beats—it sounded like a drum. After listening for a while, Henry wasn't sure whether it was the pipe or a drum. Bang—bang—bang; bang—bang—bang; suicide—suicide—suicide; kill yourself—kill yourself—kill yourself—on and on, and the room became peopled with eyes that all had the look—staring, staring, and he was running and running and getting nowhere

When the police came later, they found his body on the floor, with a bullet in his brain. The shiny new suitcase stood open, just as he had left it when he had taken the gun from it. The policemen didn't stay long; it was just a routine suicide. As they left one turned to the other and said, "My God, Joe, listen to that pipe banging. It's enough to drive a guy nuts."

UNCERTAINTY

Gerald S. May

Approaching the campus with coming darkness,
Conscious of the shadows
Stealing stealthily across the verdant grasses
As if stalking some predetermined foes,
My thoughts turned to reality.
Was not I myself likened to a shadow?
Stalking a hidden foe—uncertainty,
Knowing not whence or where to start.

Secure in our thoughts of grandeur,
Sure someone will give us the world—
Give it to us to exploit
Without the thought that:—To the world
We should give something in exchange.
To live just for today itself,
Knowing not what tomorrow might inaugurate,
Glad for the chance only to endure.

And still uncertainty clings to us.
Will it pursue us to our grave,
And there at last free
Return to fasten itself to youth again
Smirking as youth stumbles on?
Will it thus always be?
Or may it soon fade with the shadows
With the dawn of a new day?

GATHERING OF THE LEAVES

Joyce Broyles

Our family was never particularly interested in the science of geneology, but our records were pretty well kept. Our family tree, was rooted in a grey-haired old lady whom we called Grandma.

We kids remember Grandma from the collecting of the leaves of our family tree each Thanksgiving. Grandma had seven children of her own and the limbs up to us kids covered a lot of territory. I never seemed to remember just how many people were present, yet I'm certain I could never remember them all. But Grandma always knew each of us and everything about us, whether our sick dog had recovered or whether I had received that doll I wanted last Christmas.

I never will forget one of the "Gathering of the Leaves," as Mama always called them, because I was almost left behind. We all loaded on the wagon to leave. I was sitting on the tailgate of the wagon watching the mud squash under the wheels when the horses suddenly bolted. I was thrown in the middle of the muddy road. I yelled to Mama but because of the noise of the wheels on the bumpy road and the running of the horses, she didn't hear me. I jumped up and started running after the wagon; it stopped two hundred yards up the road. When I ran up to it Mama was very scared, but as I approached the wagon, she, seeing my new dress splattered with mud, suddenly became angry. She debated whether to send me back to change my clothes or to leave me. But my pleading soon caused her anger to subside and I was allowed to go. We arrived at Grandma's just in time for dinner. Grandma got quite a kick out of my mishap and always teased me about it by calling me "mud pie."

At the "Gathering of the Leaves," dinner was always served outside under the trees. It reminded me of the pilgrim story in our primer. The food: turkey, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie, preserves and all that naturally goes with Thanksgiving was always delicious.

Grandma had a peculiar habit or superstition. When we were finished with the dinner and the older people were sitting around talking, she would interrupt our games and call everyone into the living room. We always knew what was coming. Grandma would bring in a big white pitcher with only one cup, Grandpa's mustache cup. Then she would fill the cup with the boiling contents of the pitcher, and pass it from one to another of us, refilling it each time as it was emptied. Much to our dislike we could not con-

tinue our games until even the smallest child had been served. Grandma had no idea how many young mouths were scorched because of this. It was Grandma's belief that hot sassafras tea on Thanksgiving would ward off colds through the coming winter. Although it never worked, the ritual was solemnly observed at each "Gathering of the Leaves."

Grandma always had to pay everyone at least one visit during the year, to return the things we left at her house at the "Gathering of the Leaves." She knew that it was bad luck to return for any forgotten article after we had left the house to go home. Grandma never seemed to realize that the hats, gloves, scarfs, pocketbooks, and many other articles were purposely left. Mama always searched us for unnecessary items before we left home. We always managed to hide an extra hair ribbon, handkerchief, or something else in our clothing, that was dropped casually in a corner of Grandma's house. Grandma unerringly knew just which article belonged to what child.

Even now, as I sit back after Thanksgiving dinner, I smile and look toward the door expecting Grandma to enter with the old white pitcher and Grandpa's mustache cup, as she used to do at the "Gathering of the Leaves."

IF I WERE KING

William C. Kearney

If I were king,
I'd make decree
That each man would
His money give
To State.
Each man would
A pauper be,
Until a boon
He had done
For me.
The boon I'd ask
Would have to be
A deed—
Unselfish, honest, true,
To fellow man.
Then, myself
To test I'd put;
But, ah—alas!
A pauper I,
A pauper I'd have to be.

A DAY OF SOLITUDE

A Freshman Theme

Kermit Potter

Sometimes when everything is going wrong and the people seem to annoy me, I like to get away from everyone and everything pertaining to civilization to spend a day in the blissful company of Mother Nature.

This I like best in the spring, when the sun has climbed far enough over head to have warmed the earth and the grass has sprung up covering the ground with its soothing green blanket. At this time of year I am in a vacuum formed by the constant urge for adventure and the ever-enduring captivity of spring fever.

In this season of new birth I like to walk through the forest of pines with their evergreen branches hanging overhead and their needles of past years carpeting the ground beneath my feet with a perfectness that no rug could ever accomplish. It is pleasant to have the spring breeze spray my nose with the stinging scent of rising sap from the young twigs. Just to sit and listen to the many birds as they pour forth their love songs with all the vigor and splendor that this season of mating can produce gives rise to a happiness which is unsurpassed in any other environment.

I like to walk among the trees when their leaves are dense enough to prevent the sun from shining through, and the semi-twilight transfers the wildness of the vast surroundings into my inner-being, so for a short time I become a part of the great forest and its inhabitants of animals and birds.

At these times I feel the nearness of something pure and good. Then I begin to have a feeling of sympathy toward the people of our civilized world who have never experienced this sentiment of heavenly solitude.

AND STILL OTHERS

Laura Virginia Roberts

Give me but a place to stay
Where I may
Watch him climb
High to the stars.
And I will know
(Nor have to say)
His victories are mine—
Hang up the stars!

RENDEZVOUS

George Cecil

Chuck Cooke left the spacious square facing the Grande Poste and became absorbed into the crowded streams of traffic along Rue d'Isly. He noticed the steady processions of vehicles creeping along in the dark. But he soon became aware of the push and pull of pedestrians in his hurry along the tree-lined street. With an occasional sweep of his elbow, he brushed aside the supplications of begging and sweating Arabs. The smell of wine and stale smoke nauseated him. Delicate aromas of perfumed women standing in dark doorways would have ensnared him had he not been determined to keep his appointment. He ignored the rhythmic chirping of the French women as he turned off into a dark narrow alley lined with shops and restaurants.

Away from the pulsating artery of Algiers, he soon found himself rapping at a dark doorway. Madame Braas met him with an embrace and admitted him into a dark, low-ceilinged dining room punctuated here and there with the charming ooh-la-lahs of the women as they cooed at the jests of their escorts. She led him into her kitchen where she implanted a kiss upon his cheek. In response to his query as to Ruth's arrival, she sang out gayly "non, non, monsieur, pas encore." With an upsweep of her arm she continued, "Elle n'est pas ici." Chuck understood and shaking his head he sat down at the big circular table and began sipping wine from a filled glass.

Fatima, the Arab cook, arched her back considerably so as to escape the steaming vapors arising from the potatoes frying over a gas flame. She looked over at Chuck and smiled. At the same time she opened the oven door and exhibited the chicken she was roasting for dinner. Then Mme. Braas appeared in the doorway with Ruth. As usual Chuck watched the two go through the technique of embracing each other. The madame never failed to execute this routine. Ruth, he observed, followed through with complete understanding as she threw a wink at him. He poured a glass of wine for her. As they conversed, the Arab cook came over to the table and placed a small basket of brown bread before them.

The madame appeared in the doorway with another couple who were seated around the commodious table after the accepted exchange of felicitations. The girl was tall and graceful and part of her long blonde hair obscured her left eye. The young man, it developed, was a French naval officer and a nephew of Madame Braas. Fatima limped

over to the party and served apertifs. In short time the young Frenchman was gesticulating wildly and explaining the technical superiority of the Allied powers. The blonde was showing Ruth an arm laden with costume jewelry which twinkled in the candlelight. All the time Chuck was eyeing the blonde. Suddenly it struck him that he had seen her some place recently. He remembered her now. He had seen her at a recent party on the beach. But he recalled that she was brunette. She was still comely, he was thinking, when he responded to the officer's tapping on his shoulder. The crippled Fatima returned with more aperitifs.

During the meal there was less conversation on the part of the young naval officer. In fact, everyone seemed more meditative in the shadowy kitchen. The smoke, the fatty odors, and the wine served to deaden the responses of the diners. The tall blonde was watching Chuck with languid eyes; the Frenchman reached over and lighted Ruth's cigarette.

An ensemble of accordion and guitar began playing a familiar chanson. The naval officer and Ruth got up from the table and went through the doorway into the dining room where couples were already dancing. And after two dances they had failed to return to the kitchen table. Nor did Chuck care for he was becoming more attracted to the blonde all the time. And as for the blonde, she affected infatuation easily, as was her habit, with her gentle purrings of "mon cherie" and "mon petit chou." They arose from the table.

As they left by the back entrance, Chuck pressed a thousand franc note into Madame Braas' hand. In the alley he drew the blonde's warm body to his and they walked into the dark Algiers night. Rue d'Isly was less crowded now and the tempo of Algiers had subsided somewhat. The salt breeze was stimulating at this time of night and the path of the moon was visible upon the calm sea. Under the stars Algiers reposed in its tiered whiteness.

PUT DOWN THAT SPADE, SAM

Edwin Carter

DEDICATIONS:

This work is humbly dedicated to: Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ernest Hemingway, James M. Cain, Thomas Wolfe, and Marcel Proust.

On the door was the sign: Ben Knucklehead, Private Investigations. A large, glaring eye was under the lettering. The eye was slightly blood-shot.

Knucklehead opened the door and staggered into his office. He paused on his way to the door of the inner office to rape his stenographer, but he had no time for idle frivolity. He had to think.

A blonde dressed in an expensive shark-skin slack suit was waiting in the inner office. She was the pin-up type blonde. Before either spoke, Ben tossed his camel's hair coat over the bust of Allan Pinkerton and drank two fingers—neat—of embalming fluid. The woman spoke first:

"I got a case for you, Big Boy," she said in a voice that seemed to come from a deep cave or somewhere.

"Yeah? Scotch or Rye?"

"No, Bright-Eyes, the kind of case you call criminal—with money and dames and guns and things. You know—just like in the movies."

"Keep talking. What's the caper?" He leaned back in his chair and put his feet up.

"I want you to find my husband. He's a rat," she said. She perched on top of the desk.

"If he's a rat, why find him?"

"Because the skunk owes me three months' alimony." She took out a cigar and a jade holder from her white linen handbag and began to smoke. "My name is Frances Remley and my husband Al is a used-car dealer. He hadn't paid me any alimony in three months. Someone told me he was in the Cormorant Club last night, throwing away the greenbacks."

She paused to blow a smoke-ring.

"I want you to find him. I want to twist his arm off and knock his teeth out with it." She tossed a hundred-dollar bill on Knucklehead's desk, flicked the ashes from her cigar onto the carpet, and strode out.

Knucklehead rubbed the bill. The ink didn't come off. He put it into the office safe. He drank two more fingers of embalming fluid and stared at the calendar, which was for February, 1932. The picture of Herbert Hoover stared back at him. Finally he put on his light-tan trench-coat and dropped a Luger automatic into the left pocket. The embalming fluid went into the right. He left the office, got into his car, and drove to the Cormorant Club. A grey Ford coupe followed him. He made no attempt to lose it.

The Cormorant Club was empty except for a tall, thin old man who was the doorman. His hair fell lankly over his forehead like moss clinging to rock. His voice was an old rusty hinge.

"Did you see Al Remley last night?" Knucklehead asked, crinkling a five-dollar bill between his fingers.

"Yeah." The old man glued his eyes to the bill.

"Who did he leave with?"

"With Siegfried Greenroad. The big fat guy who collects little statues of birds."

Knucklehead sneered at him and put the five-dollar bill back into his pocket. The old man's face was like a lost battle. Knucklehead started out. He saw from the window the grey Ford coupe parked outside. Before he could do anything, the outside door opened and a small man entered.

He was very small. He wore a dark suit, a dark shirt, and a white tie. His eyes were large and sad. He slugged Knucklehead with a cricket-bat.

The Green Bay Packers were kicking a football. The football was Knucklehead's head. He forced his eyes open.

The old doorman was lying in a pool of blood. He had been beaten to death with the cricket-bat. Knucklehead reeled toward the bar. Behind the bar lay the body of a large fat man. Knucklehead recognized him as Siegfried Greenroad. He had been strangled with a garden-hose.

Knucklehead drove back to his office. This time no car followed him.

The lights were on in the office. The filing cabinets were torn open. Books and papers were scattered on the floor. The small, sad-eyed man in the dark suit was sitting at Knucklehead's desk. He was smiling thoughtfully. He had been stabbed with a garden-spade.

Knucklehead searched the little man's pockets. He found a .25 automatic pistol, two pieces of chewing gum, a packet of belladonna seed, a membership card in the Jolly Boys'

Cricket Club, and a driver's license. The dead man had been called Joel Karo. He had been employed as a gardener by Al Remley.

Knucklehead drove to Al Remley's house. It was a white functional concrete structure. A garden was in front. A few calla lilies were planted there, but they weren't trying.

Frances Remley answered the door herself. She was wearing a satin dressing gown. It made obvious the fact that she was stacked and not like pan-cakes either. She didn't say anything. She took Knucklehead out to the sun porch and gave him a drink.

He sniffed at it. There was a faint odor of bitter almonds.

"I've found out where your husband is," he said.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. He's dead. You did it."

"You're drunk," she said, "get out before I call the police." She had turned pale and sat up on the lounge. She slid one hand under a cushion.

Knucklehead put down his drink before he spoke. "No. I'm not tanked up. You killed him and buried him out under the calla lilies. You killed all the others, too."

He slid his hand into the coat pocket and grasped the rough grip of the Luger. Then he went on:

"You picked me for an out, a fall guy. I was supposed to knock off Greenroad and the gardener, and then you could claim they killed your dear husband Al. You didn't want alimony. You wanted the insurance.

"Your big mistake was putting Al under the calla lilies. It isn't good for them."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

Frances Remley pulled a .45 from under the cushion and shot him twice in the belly before he shot the gun from her hand.

She sat on the couch and watched him call the police.

"Ben," she said, "Ben, you wouldn't do this to me. No, you wouldn't. You love me, Ben."

"Yeah."

She was very quiet after that. The police came and took her away. Ben sat in the chair, bleeding. There was a faint odor of jasmine and stale axle-grease in the air.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "It doesn't matter where you die. In the sun porch or under the lilies. You die. You sleep the big sleep."

He took the bottle of embalming fluid from his pocket. It was empty. He sobbed softly.

A HOME

William C. Kearney

Man, what wantest thou of me?

To you I've given life,

A mind to think

And a world to roam.

Man, what wantest thou of me?

What! A home?

Yes, a home.

My pilgrimage has run

From East to West,

Yea, North to South,

And yet, I find

No solace for my mind,

No dirt in this great land

Unstained by greedy hands.

Selfish, Cruel and Glutty,

All are rulers of this sainted sand;

I find no peace, no home.

Ah! Man, you searchest long to find—

Your peace will come, when in your mind,

You displace Selfish, Cruel and Glutty

With, Honor, Service, and Love Divine;

This can be found in all mankind,

Only then, will you find

Your home.

LINES WRITTEN AFTER BATTLE

Laura Virginia Roberts

I fell into Eternity for a little while—

And all was dark,

But guns still sounded; voices called.

My eyes ached and burned and I knew fear—

Fear of Hell—

But I had already seen Hell.

The vision cleared:

I was alone—

No guns, no voices—

Others had fallen into Eternity

But not as I—

They are still out there.

CRY TO THE WILD WIND!

Harold E. Richardson



I came out of the darkness.
With a broken heart and chilled spine I viewed
The multitude.
I saw the faces, I saw them all ;
The proud, the sad, the happy, jubilant faces,
"Too happy in thy happiness."
I saw the hopeless faces,
The taunt, thin, wasted, emaciated faces.
I saw the crying face, the sweating face,
The lovely face, the defeated—
The dead face.

I saw the drunken sot, the millionaire.
I saw the minister pass.
All were running ; aimlessly running, escaping,
Vainly endeavoring to leave behind this bit of dust.

I sat beside the highway on a cold rock and saw them pass,
All speeding, madly, recklessly—
Knowing not where to go or
From whence they came.—
All struggling, all slaves,
Alone.

Alone! Alone!
Oh, that pitiable, forlorn word.
Ring out! Echo in my mind! Alone!
I see them all and myself, forsaken,

Not knowing what lies within the conscience of my comrade.
Are we just a speck of marl taken from a grimy planet
And molded into this unfathomable
Witch that we call "life?"
Moaning, crying, smiling, cheating, stealing, slaying—
And for what? Who knows? Why? Why?

I saw them pass.
I ate the greasy food on which they subsist.
No, on which *we* subsist.
I looked into the clouds,
I looked into my heart—
I cried to the wild wind!—
I vomited in the gutter.

A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

Elizabeth Pennington

The wedding of Raymond and Alice was solemnized at eight o'clock on Easter morning in the year 1924. Their marriage was performed in the cathedral of their small Louisiana home town.

To the romantic Raymond, his bride was blonde beautiful Alice, lovely in the white satin wedding gown of her mother. He would love her forever for her own perfect self.

To the practical aristocratic Raymond, his bride was Alice Carroll, daughter of Judge and Mrs. David Morris Carroll, one of the oldest and most distinguished families in the town. He would be proud to share his name with her.

They went to a secluded but select mountain lodge for their honeymoon. In two weeks they were back in the three-room apartment which they had rented. The apartment was only a temporary abode since they were to begin at once the building of the house which they had planned during their courtship.

Raymond's furniture store seemed to prosper from the beginning. Everybody was buying furniture, or so it seemed. He enjoyed selling furniture. Raymond felt a personal interest in helping to build homes. "The home is the basis of our democracy, our religion, our own particular American way of life," he'd tell his wife when in one of his philosophizing moods. With this enterprising store established, he was one of the town's leading business men. Alice was not surprised when he came home boasting, "Look at your husband and with the same glance, see the new presi-

dent of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Boy, are you a lucky woman!" She knew that the act was all for her benefit, so she laughed with him.

Their first child, a daughter, was born not long after they had been married a year. She had inherited Raymond's dark complexion and black curly hair. Alice would have it no other way, but to call her Rayma.

Life for them was made more complete by the success of Carita, Alice's younger sister. Dark-haired, dark-eyed Carita, opposite in features to her sister, was the family's career girl. Since early childhood she had shown a remarkable talent and love for the piano. Her parents had provided her lessons from Professor Linneman at home during her school years. As soon as she was graduated from high school, she went to New York to study at the conservatory.

Carita had the determination to practice and to study long hours. The professors at the school called her a brilliant pupil. Her first concerts were highly praised. The public was beginning to recognize her name, she noted. By the critics' claims she was a promising young artist with a mature interpretation of the music she played.

The family at home followed her success with the usual family pride. They saved the clippings she sent and showed them to their friends. Eagerly they awaited a home-town concert.

Carita's ambition was to tour the country as a concert pianist; at times her dream did not seem so far from realization. This summer she had come home for a vacation. Actually, it was not a vacation from the piano, "An artist," she explained, "does not leave his work as a business man shuts up his office." Music to her was the most vital part of living.

The young pianist knew that the concert she had booked for the end of the summer would be one of the most momentous of her career. This program would be played before a home town audience. Success here meant more personally than in the large places she had played. It was scheduled for her to appear as soloist with the New Orleans Symphony. The concert was to be given in the local high school auditorium. Her thrill and pride of the coming event was almost childlike. To her the hours of practicing seemed like minutes.

In the preparation for the event of the concert, Carita made a shopping trip to New Orleans. The chief concern of the day was to find a formal gown suitable for the occasion. She was woman enough to worry about her dress, yet musician enough to know that her attire must be sub-

duced so that her playing would hold the spotlight. "This will require extensive shopping," she said as she left her home for New Orleans.

She must have been in a dream-like trance, for that day she stepped in front of a moving street car. The trolley, as it struck her, knocked her body onto the tracks. She died instantly.

The shock that came with her death was more than the loss of an artist to the world, or the grief that those who loved her had to bear. Several intimately close lives were affected.

All of the home-town people had read her obituary as it appeared in the New Orleans newspapers. They saw the word *Colored*. It was the custom of southern newspapers to list such information concerning those who had died.

A trace of Negro blood had been found far back in her family line. The conservatory officials had gained this information while investigating her background before she entered school. The knowledge had been relayed to the newspapers.

While the townspeople gossiped, reviving long forgotten tales of scandal, Raymond packed his clothes and without saying good-bye left his wife and home forever.

MAN

William C. Kearney

Tired, toiling, tremulous thing—
Starving, striving, seeking soul—
Brought to live,
Brought to die,
Brought from where?
Brought for why?
Arise! you shrinking, straining thing,
And live!
Man—you are called.
Man—you are to be.
Cast off the sorrow Satan sought;
Bring forth the blooming, blossomed branch—
The happiness of Heaven's Hope;
Strong will you be,
Strong in will and mind
—And FREE.

THE COUNTRY TEACHER

Golda Pensol

"Here she comes," cried little Ken
As up the path I hurried.
The cry relayed from one to all
And 'round the house they scurried.

"Good mornin' ma'am," said forward Rose
"We'yns got here kind o' early
But we've been good, now ain't we Bea?
That is we'uz almost, nearby.

Then Sherman laughed and poked at Don
And Bonnie blushed slightly
"We didn't tease her, no'm not us,"
Said Billy, smiling brightly.

"The dogs 'fit' some, but 'twarn't our fault
We only hissed a little"
Then Harold and "T" laughed loud and long
And Haz' and Covie giggled.

"Gee whizz," said Jim, "now ain't gals dumb
Their tongues are loose and floppin'
I guess ye got us in Dutch now
We'll likely get a floggin'."

I smiled and ruffled Tommy's hair
And winked at bashful Mary.
"We've had our fun, now what do you say
We get our lessons, shall we?"

They got their books and settled down
At first to study reading.
I looked at Roy, his gaze was blank,
I knew his mind was fleeting.

He saw not words upon his page
But meadows ripe in clover,
A barefoot boy in overalls,
A fishing rod and Rover.

Ah me, a teacher I, but still
On days like this I wonder
If 'twould be very wrong if I
Dismissed to nature plunder.

But as it is I guess I'll stay
With formal education
And in the end I'll know that I
Built leaders for our nation.

ORAN

John Vukovcan

The city of Oran was buttressed on one side by the majestic ranges of the Atlas Mountains. On the opposite side, the clear, blue, placid Mediterranean Sea washed the shores of the city. Running parallel between the sea and mountains and on either side of the city, a vast emptiness stretched itself far into the horizon. The monotony of the seemingly unlimited, drab, flat wasteland was broken by an occasional mound. These mounds were created by the wind which piled sand against any foreign object in its path. The wind raced unrestrained along the desert until it spent its force against the walls of the city. This desolate plain was canopied by an ever present blue sky, with the hot sun casting its brilliant rays earthward.

From atop a hill overlooking the city of Oran, a beautiful contrast of colors and patterns was presented. This site may have been an experimental station for architects because the homes did not conform to any singular plan. There were homes built on raised green lawns with colored paths leading up to them—whereas others had a path leading downward to the home which sat in a gentle depression. Some houses were built round with glass replacing most of the brick—others were built at right angles, “U” shaped, “X” shaped and various other angles. There were large, majestic houses which expressed pomp and splendor, and low clean, white bungalows which had an air of intimacy about them. There were large hotels and business buildings made in the latest artistic designs which had projections from each story to catch the rays of the sun. There were many other ingenious structures made, no doubt, in the height of the architect’s zeal for unconformity.

There was a blend of many races, colors and creeds housed in this teeming oriental city. Various Arab tribes, tired and spent after their futile fight against the natural elements outside the city wall, made this their home. Each tribe had some characteristic whereby one could differentiate them from the other. Some women had veils covering the lower portion of their face, others had intricate tattoo designs on their foreheads and cheeks; while others, which I remember most vividly had a large portion of their nose cut away which made them look gruesome. They may have done this to keep the Americans from them. The tribes were very meticulous as far as their women were concerned. The various races mingled freely and harmoniously.

There was a mysterious air about the whole place which

smacked of romance, intrigue, adventure and danger. A person could have any of them if he wished. Oran has an odor of its own which is indefinable. One can travel the world but could not find an odor which can haunt a person as it did.

UMPIRE McGUIRE

Elizabeth A. Murphy

Mike J. McGuire was a most renowned "Class Z" umpire,
Who was frequently spoken of as blind and often called a
liar.

The game was between the Dead Birds and the Dirty Sox,
The day Mike called them on the guy in the batter's box.

Already he's called strikes and balls wrong, and a homer a
foul,
Mike J. McGuire made as good an umpire as would a Jersey
cow.

The Sox were leading 61-58, a mighty pitchers' duel.
It seemed hopeless for the Birds, unless they'd bend or
break a rule.

The terrible event happened in the last half of number nine,
When the Birds' Slugger Fioraselli stepped to the plate to
shine.

O'Leary, Sisopaski, and Jones were on, making the bases
loaded;
This was the time for Slugger to homer, for which he was
noted.

The pitcher had a count of two and one on Outfielder
Fioraselli,
A powerful cut, a called strike, and a ball—too near the
belly.

Another ball turned across the plate, but high, as anyone
could see.
But still, this blind thief of a fifth columnist said, "Strike
three!"

The enraged Dead Bird fans rushed out as these sad words
were said;
Now, due to reasons beyond our control, Umpire McGuire
is dead.

BY THE WAYSIDE

John T. Blackburn

Over the week-end I took a trip to Richmond, Kentucky on a Greyhound Bus. It felt good just to be rolling along the country side, watching everything and wondering what about this or what about that. I saw an old house with its aged, decrepit shutters hanging against the sun like mighty flags of peace waving through the air. In their own sense they were mighty and strong as any army. They defied everything. On and on I went. The strong wooden fence-posts beside the road did not seem to care where anyone was going. They were just standing there with all the knowledge of the past few years wrapped up inside them. If only they could tell man what they knew, but man was trying to destroy them. He was digging and pulling them out of the ground where they had been so peaceful and quiet for so long. In their place he was putting steel posts—the symbol of a new age. Was man to forget his life-long friends of wood and destroy them with their worst enemy, fire? It was probable because man is that way, but he is being watched over. Large, shadowy trees were forever keeping their eyes on him. They had been watching him for many, many years. They had seen him drift from here to there. If only man was like a tree, firm, upright, and always high and mighty to the life around him. How can men be like trees? Trees are just things. They can't talk. If only they could, maybe man could learn the secret to many things.

On top of a hill I could see over miles and miles of beautiful, level land below me. It stretched far and wide until it was out of sight. There was the earth. Mighty and majestic in her own way. There was something for men to be thankful for. Men are always too busy to be thankful for anything until it is too late. He is sorry, then, that it all happened. Maybe the earth doesn't care or worry about anything. She goes about her business the same way every day. Man is the one who worries. He worries from day to day if this will happen or that will happen. He worries about the earth, sometimes. But nothing ever happens. Maybe it is man's destiny to worry.

The bus was rolling over man-made roads, unlike the things of the earth. It was hard, cold and lifeless all the way. You could tell it was man-made. It didn't possess the beauty of life like things created to hold their place on the earth among men. Then all of a sudden the road ran out. It was a different kind of a road we were on now. It

Twenty-two

was like the road of a life. One thinks he is flying along fine when suddenly he is stirred to find that there is no road under him. What is one to do? I wondered as I left the bus and wandered aimlessly up the street to my destination.

MY CREED

Gerald S. May

I believe that life is worth living, and worth living to the hilt. Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability, bringing to play the standards of your beliefs. Anything worth doing is worth doing well. Too many people just get around to living when they die. Don't be like these people. Live while you can and enjoy it. In this life search out the truth, for truth is beautiful; also bring untruth into the light so that through this untruth may change to truth. Be the inferior of no man in this world. Be the superior of men, not thinking you are, but striving to reach as high a goal as you possibly can. To accomplish this you must work.

I believe there is a God. Even those who do not believe in God had best accept the fact that there is a reason to believe in Him. This belief is the basis for good and evil. If there is no God, why then should we be good, living to better ourselves or the world? Religion is the most comforting, encouraging element we have at our command today. Where else can we get such peace and solitude? Use everything that you have within your reach to make your life as full as possible.

Live not thinking that you must pay tomorrow for what you do today. Because you do good today, don't think that evil is justified for tomorrow. One right thing does not erase a wrong either in your conscience or in the eyes of others.

There is a time in each man's life when he must leave this world to go to another place where all his dreams of a perfect world may come true. When your time comes to do this have no regrets for things you have either done or left unfinished in this world. If you live according to your creed and belief, that is all the world can ask of you. You then can depart in peace with yourself, leaving your memory to live in your place.

BOTH BARRELS BLAZING OR: TWO-GUN DRACULA RIDES AGAIN

A Sizzling Saga of the Old West

Edwin Carter

The great golden Palomino stallion thundered across the brown desert. By his easy control of the horse, the rider showed himself to be a true son of the old West, a man of distinction. Who was this mysterious stranger? Was it a bird? Was it a plane? Was it MacArthur? No! It was "Two-Gun" Dracula, the Poosey Kid.

"Two-Gun" Dracula soon reached the little town of Dowadiddy. Here was the famous Bucket of Blood saloon and gambling palace, once owned by the Smith Brothers, but now the property of the treacherous "Stacked-Deck" Greep, Dracula's most deadly enemy.

He wasted no time in town but sped to the simple cattle ranch of Daisy June Codliver, his beloved school marm. Dracula wasted no time in formality. In a short while both man and woman were sitting on the old corral fence and watching the moon rise over the purple sage-brush. Five hours later "Two-Gun" spoke:

"Purty night, ain't it, ma'am?"

"It shore is, "Two-Gun."

Two hours passed; at last he thought of something to say that would please her:

"You've really got purty hair, ma'am."

"Thank you, "Two-Gun." Do you really think so?"

"Why, shore, ma'am. It's so long and golden and—oh, shucks, I just remembered something I got to do.

"What is it, 'Two-Gun?' "

"I gotta go and curry-comb mah horse, ma'am."

Early the next morning Dracula received a message that the evil "stacked-Deck" Greep was planning to hold-up the stage-coach in Gopher Gulch. When he got to Gopher Gulch, the stage had already been robbed and the bandits had fled.

Dracula followed the trail, until he came to an Indian, seated on the desert, surrounded with products of his handicraft. Dracula wasted no words:

"Which way did they go?"

Twenty-four

"They went thata way."

After buying six blankets and a bowl, Dracula thundered after the bandits. Suddenly he found himself in Steve Canyon. Bandits sprang up from all sides. There were at least a hundred. They all begin firing at once. With a sickening shock, Dracula realized that he had only five cartridges left. He was trapped.

Leaving Steve Canyon, Dracula urged his horse on to the Bucket of Blood saloon. He was going to settle up with "Stacked-Deck" Greep once and for all.

Just as he reached those green swinging doors, a shot was fired inside. The piano player hadn't been doing his best and he was now carried out on a shutter. As the corpse went by, Dracula took off his Stetson. After all, he had always been rather fond of Harry.

He drew his pearl-handled 45's and rushed through the door. Both barrels were blazing, spitting hot lead into the gold-plated spittoons. When the smoke cleared away, "Stacked-Deck" Greep was lying dead on one side of the saloon; "Two-Gun" Dracula was mortally wounded on the other side. Daisy June was kneeling beside him. Dimly he could hear the quartet singing *their* song: "I've Got a Humpty-Dumpty Heart."

"Oh, "Two-Gun," don't leave me," she sobbed.

He forced the words from his lips: "I'm a-goin', gal."

"Oh, 'Two-Gun,'" she moaned.

"I'm goin' down that long, long trail. I'm a-headin' for the last round-up, gal. I'm a-goin', gal."

"Well, why don't you go?", she said when she had her deep grief under control.

"You're a-sittin' on mah feet, gal."

STRANGE BEDFELLOW

Leonor B. Adams

Mr. Jackson wearily climbed the stairs to the second floor of the old, rambling hotel. He had been on the road for several weeks attending tobacco auctions in various places in central Georgia. Accommodations were inadequate in these towns in the early 1900's. Tonight he had to share a bed with a man who had already retired. He gained the landing and stopped at the hub of three corridors. He rubbed his aching head and tried to remember the clerk's directions to the unnumbered room. Oh, yes. He turned left and walked to the end of the hall, turned right, and there was the room behind the first door on the left.

He opened the door. The kerosene lamp was burning low and the hearth-fire flickered shadows on the walls. A glance at the bed proved the clerk's supposition; a still form was clearly outlined by the neatly arranged bedclothes which were pulled up to the headboard.

Mr. Jackson quietly closed the door, tiptoed to the table and blew out the light. He divested himself of all his clothing except his long underwear. He slipped easily into bed without disturbing his bed-mate.

In a few minutes the door opened. A young man and woman entered. The man mentioned something about the lamp burning out and the girl giggled. They sat down in the chairs in front of the fireplace. Mr. Jackson was about to remonstrate when the young man tenderly embraced his companion. At this Jackson settled back to enjoy the fireside drama.

Then the thought came to him that he should not deny his bedfellow the pleasure of the scene. He nudged him with his elbow—no response! He poked him harder—still no reply. Finally he started to shake him by the shoulder. The arm felt strange. He ran his hand quickly down the body. It was hard, cold, and clammy. With a yell, Mr. Jackson leaped out of bed and ran out of the room, taking the bedclothes with him.

When he had completed his roll down the stairs and extricated himself from the bedclothes, he found the two frightened young people and the clerk looking on in amazement.

After a medley of who's, how's, and what's, the situation was clarified. An elderly hotel guest had passed on from a heart attack several hours earlier. The family had

been notified, but neither they nor the undertaker could arrive until the following morning. The young couple had volunteered to "sit up with the corpse," as was customary in that section. They had left the room to get something to eat. Mr. Jackson had confused the clerk's instructions and taken the wrong turn.

LASSITUDES

William C. Kearney

Nothing to bind me to this world
Save an obscure passion.
A passion for life?
Ha! Vile word of fools!
A passion for personal pleasures—
The reaped reward of achievement
Stems from idle jealousy—
Passion for mortal praise,
Be you our seed of life?

Though we labor—
Though we strive—
All our gain is wasted lust,
Our passions for the worldly treasures
Will melt again into dust.

Dissolute lassitudes—
Go!
Strike not my mind
Drown not my soul
In your grasp, I sing to piteous depths of remorse;
In your grasp, I welcome the league of Satan;
Thou, gore-stained hand—
Thou, ripped brow—
Chide of Men—BE OUT!

JUST THINKING

Gerald S. May

Cool, crisp, and clear comes the blanket of night
With moonlight reflected from snow so white,
Bringing with it . . . silence . . . and thoughts.

Thoughts of things so very dear,
Thoughts of time when you will be near,
Of a smile . . . and a kiss.

Holding hands, a walk in the dark,
Ice skating and the amusement park,
Football games . . . a heart to heart talk.

Thoughts of the future which we will share,
Thoughts of love and why I care,
Thoughts of children . . . and our home.

Beauty so rare will never be found
Even if searched for the whole world round.
The beauty of silence . . . and thoughts of you.

MY WALK TO HELL

George W. Campbell

As I walk across these wooden floors to Hell,
I look back through my past life
To find the deeds that I have done:
They are good and bad; the bad exceed the good.
Therefore my soul is bound for Hell.

If the Judge would give me a chance,
I would right the wrongs I have done.
Some I don't know about;
Others I have gloried in doing.
These are the ones that hurt my conscience.

The jury is out now.
Oh! Here they come; my knees are shaking.
"Jury, how do you find this man on all charges?"
"For black-mail, guilty.
Stealing candy from a baby, guilty.
For whipping his wife, guilty."

"My good man, what do you have to say for yourself?"
"Your honor, I deny all charges."
"You had a chance to reform on earth, but you didn't.
Therefore I sentence you to the hottest pit in Hell."

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VOLUME FIFTEEN

NINETEEN FORTY-NINE

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FOREWORD

With the aim and standard of previous volumes in mind, the editors present the fifteenth annual volume of *Belles Lettres* to the many readers among their fellow-students, the faculty, and other friends of the college.

LONG HAVE I WAITED

Zenaida V. Natividad

(This poem was written by Miss Natividad in memory of her father who was taken prisoner by the Japanese during the occupation.)

I sat by the doorstep—
And waited for you,
I sat alone, and thought of you and you alone.
I waited long—
So very long till twilight came;
It came, it passed, but you never came.
The moon had risen—
And the crickets had begun to sing;
Yet I sat there all alone—
Ever waiting! hoping! expecting!

Every twilight
I never miss to hope,
I never to miss to wait,
I never miss above all to pray
God, the Almighty, to bring you back to me.
Yet so many twilights have come and passed,
So many lonely moments wasted in hopeless waiting.
So many tears shed unseen—
Till one bitter night, I felt you came;
I knew then you were gone forever into eternity.

Now—whenever twilight deepens
And the memory of you lingers by—
I feel my heart is weakened;
I whisper softly:
“Be brave, my heart, be calm, be still.
It’s God’s will, not mine. His will be done.”
And mournfully I bow my head
With only God to hear my prayer—
And the twilight to witness my sighs,
My tears, and my loneliness.

THE MISTAKE

Harold Richardson

A question, a hope, your admonishment
Were our weapons that day you sent
A small thing crashing on a bitter rock
And left the thing a hollow mock
Of what it once had been eternities
Ago, when . . . well . . . that’s another tale
That you would scoff like one who sees
Statistics, black, cold, but cannot smell
The fragrance of a flower.

ON BOOKS AND SIGHT

Patricia D. Boone Miller

If one should be forever consuming books
what would he discover?
Not the earth’s passion throbbing beneath
a scarf of grass;

Not the tree's music lifting up their
throats for a melody to pass.
Not these eternity-dipped diadems for
sight of which cicada sings,
These embodiments of holiness to which
the Soul's lips cling
Can be found, or clutched, or kept if one
must look
His whole journey through into the
leaves of a book.

For tho' a book can walk a candle
through the halls of the mind,
He cannot harbor God or Love which
self must find.

Still if one would put aside the tome for sight
then he must see
Both the silence of the hills as they
fold against the skies
And the thought of the Lord
which within them lies;
What good is there to gaze at
daffodils' golden light
Unless, in considering, one glimpses
the rhapsody of life?
For as we feel the rough plank
to visualize the door,
So in creation must we hold
purpose and creator.

REQUIEM

Robert C. Points

I saw an oak leaf
Fall upon the ground.
I thought: Little leaf,
Why did you fall down?

Could it be you know
Who gave you birth,
So you now have returned
To your mother earth?

But now you are dead,
All withered and browned;
All your life you've fed
From that life-giving ground.

And now your debt is paid,
You've returned from whence you came;
Yet fear not, nay, be not afraid;
The beginning and end are just the same.

As on the tree of life,
We all yield to the strife;
And even though He counts our worth,
To us, death is just the price of birth.

LAST REQUEST

Virgil Hudnall

I left my home at battle's call,
I left my home, I gave my all;
I bled my blood, that others would not die.
Now they say "Move" from the place where I lie.

I crossed the ocean, to fight a cause,
I crossed and fought, without a pause,
I lost my life, the other proved best.
They say I must move. Oh, let my body rest.

I fought long and hard for this plot of ground,
I fought and worked hard, to help the morrow found
A much brighter world, a more cheerful band;
But now I am dead, let me lie in this land.

It is not my home, the place where I lie,
It belongs to another—one greater than I.
But I bought it with my life; this land I'll never sell,
Do not bother now my grave; let me rest where I fell.

LOOK TO THE HORIZON

Harold Richardson

Look to the horizon afar,
To the east, casting a red glow.
Ominous rays that quickly sew
The seeds of fear and strife which mar
The peace, and spread with scarlet hand
Death, waste, the infamy of man.

Look to the horizon afar,
Shade your eyes from redness and see:
Bugles, sounding taps for the free;
Drunk, trumpet-tongues men shouting, "war";
Fair children dying in the land;
The vanished footprints in the sand. . .

DIMENSIONS OF A DILEMMA

Jack Kerley

I'm a mathematical genius. Upon first examination you might say this was a barefaced lie, but, to the contrary, I'm a real, dyed-in-the-wool genius. You can say—Well, so what? It must be nice to be so smart; but Hell no—I wish I'd been born an idiot, or, better still, I wish I'd never been born at all. If I'd never been born things would have been vastly different. That woman—bless her sweet soul—who kneels there in front of the couch and sobs her heart out would now be happy and carefree—the chances are. And that green blanket would never have been placed over the still form lying on the couch . . .

The old hall clock chanted its steady cadence, and furnished a solemn background for the living sobs which punctuated the dead stillness. Through the sitting-room archway a woman can be seen kneeling in front of a couch who weeps the dry weeping of one lost in grief. Her slender fingers run helplessly over a light green blanket, as if trying to breathe life into the simple cloth cover, which outlines a human form. Her hands knot into small fists and she breathes, "Why—Why—oh, Jerry—oh-h-oh. . . ."

Oh, yes—you ask what bearing this has on my tale. Well, here's how it all came about. I'm Gerald Markham. . . . Sure, you've heard all about me. I'm the one all the pictorial magazines have ballyhooed so much. You remember—Markham wins World Academy Science prize—Gerald Markham, bright new star in the Physics firmament—Dr. Markham, rising young scientific wonder, discovers new atomic conversion method. . . . You've read it all and more, too. Well, Jerry Markham, that's me—the head brain of Chemical Horizons, Unlimited, and I guess I'm all they said I was and maybe more too. Brilliant—that's me. Yeah, I guess I was a little too brilliant. I became a physicist because I loved science, and because I loved it so much I also chose math and physics as hobbies. I'd sit around in my spare time and just mull over complicated little formulae. I used to get quite a kick out of doing this, just like someone fishing, or bowling, or something, and many of these hours of so-called relaxation paid off in many new scientific discoveries. Take for instance that—oh, but that's another story. Well, like I was saying, I concentrate on **my own** type of problems in my spare time. I wasn't getting paid for that thinking and therefore worked on whatever I wished. You know, most scientists have a pet problem, the answer to which mankind has sought for ages, and which they alone dream of solving. You know what I mean. Simple little jobs like squaring the circle, or perpetual motion, or maybe even trisecting an angle. Well, my pet dream was the fourth dimension. I guess it just fascinated me from the start, and I used to lose myself for hours on end musing over what it was, or where it was, or even if it was—and **how mathematically** I could reach it. I guess no one ever thought any more on a single subject than I did on that. It started on me somewhere way back, around my sophomore year in high school, I guess. It grew on me like an obsession and I'd work on it and think about it any chance I had. I don't imagine that many men's minds could even grasp the concept of fourth dimension, but one day I was **sure** I had it. It was so terribly complicated it was almost simple, and the hugeness of the thing terrified me. But I had to try it out—projecting myself . . . **ME**—into a fourth dimensional world. One day I was sitting in our living room with Dot—Dot's my wife, you know—and was paging through a science magazine to which I paid no attention. All of a sudden I knew I had to try right then and there to project myself into the fourth dimension. I began to concentrate mightily . . . I concentrated and concentrated and I was

A knock sounded on the door. The kneeling woman straightened quickly and wiped her swollen eyes with a sodden handkerchief, hurrying to the front door. She opened the door to face two neatly dressed men. One stepped slowly forward, hat in hand. "Mrs. Markham"—she nodded briefly—"we're quite sorry. We're —" "—Yes, I know," she said and stepped aside to allow them entrance. She trembled all over, walking.

walking up the avenue toward our house. Yes sir, that's where I was, and trying to figure out how the hell I got there all of a sudden. Mrs. Runyan came down the street. I tipped my hat, but she said nothing, nor did her eyes waver. Mrs. Runyan always liked me, so I couldn't quite figure this one out at all. But the incident passed my mind quickly when I saw the neighborhood kids playing ball over in the park.

"Hey, kids," I yelled, "how's about an eagle-eye ref?"

They never even looked my way. This puzzled me but I walked on, and so engrossed was I in my thoughts that I almost bumped into genial old Mr. Black, my favorite neighbor.

"Mr. Black, how are you?" I smiled.

He turned away and looked up at the sky.

"Mr. Black!" I repeated and jumped in front of him. I might as well have not been there at all for all the—

Oh, my God, I thought, I'm in the fourth dimension. I must be. I looked at my watch. It showed fifteen minutes earlier than in the house. **Then** I noticed the second hand. It was describing its slow circle backwards! Time ran backwards for me! A slow chill of horror made me somewhat faint, and

I rushed home. The front door was closed, and I couldn't remember opening it, but all at once I stood in my living room. Dot was screaming and I could see her bending over someone lying on our couch. I advanced and—IT WAS ME! I WAS LYING THERE! I couldn't understand. I asked Dot what it was all about, but she didn't seem to hear me. I screamed at her, but there was no response.

Then all of a sudden I got it. I was in a different dimension from hers! Sweat broke out all over me and I screamed to her hoarsely, but I knew it would do no good. I knew it all then. The phantasma of me was here in the fourth dimension, while the third dimensional remains could never follow! My head swam with the magnificent horror of the situation. To her I had died. I hadn't figured on anything like this at all.

Well, that all took place about two hours ago, or two hours from now by my watch. The doctor came in and checked me over and pronounced me dead and there's nothing at all that I can do about it. You see, I figured a way into the fourth dimension, but I forgot to find a way back out, so now I'm dead there in the third and alive here in the fourth dimension.

The men wheeled a stretcher into the room and efficiently picked up the still form, taking care not to peel back the pale green blanket before the dull eyes of the young woman—depositing it carefully on the contrivance and wheeling it slowly toward the . . .

Yeah—that's right. They're taking me out and I guess that soon they'll embalm me. Oh, well—it was a good life. . . .

BY THE LAKE ON A MISTY MORN

W. William Starns

I walk by the lake on a misty morning,
Before the sun has cleared the fog away,
And the sky is red like a firebrand burning.
The birds are up chirping, greeting the day.

A noxious mist still hugs the lake.
The sun has cleared the wooded hill,
And shining on the dewey grass make
A field of diamonds thieves cannot steal.

A big morning star looms high in the sky,
So lonely, so peaceful and bright,
A squirrel scampers nervously by,
And a lark takes a solo flight.

I walk by the lake on a misty morn,
And talk to water nymphs there.
Those beautiful creatures, water born,
With long dark wavy hair.

Our conversation is an airy one.
We never have cause to weep;
I tell them of my joy and fun;
They tell me mysteries of the deep.

It seems my stroll has just begun,
When it's time for it to cease;
I leave the scene quiet as a nun;
My heart full of joy and peace.

The sun is higher in the sapphire sky,
As I turn and look at the scene below;
I'm deeply moved as I say goodbye;
"TO ALL MEN BEAUTY DOES NOT SHOW."

COMPARISON

Josefina Angustia

The ways of Fate are inscrutable, just as much as the dictums of Love, mysterious.

Inescapable are their sharp, far-reaching clutches; inevitable are their consequences.

Fate decrees destinies and even designs courses for the life of man.

Love demands passion; most often, severs reason from the minds of men.

Fate plays on lives. How true! Twists men with this and that at pleasure.

Love gambles on hearts. How tragic! Turns feelings from joy to pain with content.

Thus the wheel of Fate goes; Puts you up today, brings you down tomorrow.

Thus the cycle of Love runs; Makes you happy this instant, keeps you wretched the next moment.

Which is more powerful, then?

Fate or Love?

Which gives the most happiness?

The most sorrow?

While from Love, men get the most joys, the most terrible pains; while from Love men taste the fullest of bitter-sweets, at the end it is always Fate who has the last say.

For Fate determines the end for which men ultimately accept and resign themselves to.

For Fate pronounces after men have struggled, after men have loved, what Life should be and must be.

IN MEMORIAM

Evelyn Fugate

R. E. F.

(Note: In memory of her brother who was killed on Okinawa, April 16, 1945.)

Come thou back to us, my brother
For without thee we are sad,
And it's only thy returning
That will ever make us glad.

Need it have been thy destiny
To die on a foreign strand
On a hill top in the morning
With thy country's warrior band?

But why am I beseeching thee,
Whose body, true, rests there?
Why am I at once less lonely?
Lo! Thy spirit now is here.

I remember you
When I was a child
And had been hurt.
You comforted me,
Then carved a doll's chair
From a box of wood.

I remember you
From tales our mother told
Around the fire,

Of the time when you fought
Boys twice your size and age
Who tortured your small dog.

I remember you
When you left school
To join the army.
Soon your letters came
Saying not to worry,
You were doing fine.

I remember you
On your first furlough.
You were handsome
In the strange uniform
But I was much too shy
To tell you so.

I remember you
When you came home at Christmas-time.
I awakened to the cry, "Ray's here."
We sat around the fire
Eating and talking,
Unaware this was your last Christmas.

I remember you
As you said goodbye.
I stood at the door—
You hugged me
And I fled, crying, to my room,
Overcome by the unexpected affection.

I remember you
When I was called, in the night,
To a neighbor's telephone.
I talked to your wife.
She said I must tell the rest
That you were dead. . . .

But that wasn't the end,
For I remember you
In the spring
When the violets you love spring up.
I remember all your kindness then
And all your lost dreams.

I remember you
When I see your son
Fast growing like you,
And he points to a picture
And says,
"There's my dad."

I remember you
When I see soldiers marching
In even ranks.
Isn't that funny,
I never saw you
In a parade?

I'll keep these memories
Locked within me
For they tell
Of all the good things you were,
And you will live always
In the world of my heart.

EVENING RAIN

Gerald S. May

Heavy clouds begin to thicken
As twilight falls fast about me.
Rolls of thunder—lightning's companion
Increase in waves of frightening fury.

The weeping willow bends its head still lower,
As if burdened by a heavier load.
And the autumn wind—spelling dolor,
Skips whirlpools of dust down the country road.

The first drops fall in greedy lust—
The advance guard of the storm. . . .
The drops fall faster, laying the dust,
And the country takes on a new form.

Melancholy sets in with the steady rain,
Replacing L'Allegro as the ruling monarch.
And with the rain steadily pelting the pane,
The wind slackens and blends with the dark.

A THREE-LETTER WORD MEANING 'HAIL'

Edwin Carter

It was August. It was hot. I wore my blue tropicals. The coat would hide the red paint on my old blue sport shirt, and I wouldn't have to put so much junk in my trousers. I met Arch in Stockton's; he was leering at a pretty girl in Life Magazine. He wore slacks and a T-shirt, but he wore the same T-shirt, or its twin brothers, all year round. I said hello and he blew a puff of pipe smoke at me. No believer in social convention.

"Seen Ansel?" I said.

"No. I think he went across the river."

"Where's Tommy?"

"He has contracted with his brother to ride herd on the younger generation."

"Poor little blighters," I said.

"Precisely."

We moved back to the soda fountain. After an hour or so one of the girls asked us if we wanted anything. "No," Arch said. I asked for a glass of water and got a half a glass. The rest went to cool off the counter.

We sat there a half hour, resting our backs on the counter, and listened to other people's nickels in the juke box. Then we spun around and faced the inside of the counter.

"Louise," Arch said.

"Yes," the counter girl said.

"Limeade. With a lot of ice."

"What's yours?" she said to me.

We went out and stood on the ledge beneath the plate glass window and crunched our ice. It took eight minutes to eat it.

I threw my cup and straws into the gutter. "Hotter than Hell."

"There is no Hell. Nothing could equal this."

I went in and got a pack of Camels. I looked over the two book racks and the magazine rack. There was nothing new. I went out. Arch was sitting on the fender of a car parked before the drugstore.

"Give me a cigarette," he said.

"You've got your pipe."

"Give me a cigarette and none of your lip."

"Let's go to the Sweat Shop."

"I'm in."

We went to the Sweat Shop. There was no one there. It was too early, only 9:45. We played the pinball machines. I made ten free games on my second nickel and between us we ran up fifteen games.

"Ah, the hell with it," Arch said on the eighth game. He lifted the end of the machine and banged it down to tilt it.

"Let's go," he said.

"Go where?"

"Crazy probably."

It was 10:38. The pavement was hot to my hand. We stood on the corner of Main and Second Streets. A new Buick sped down the street, heading south. A police car was parked across the street from us; it was headed north. A loose-limbed cop with a face that looked like it had been hacked out of cedar with a dull axe was sitting on the fender of the police car. He was chewing tobacco. He looked at the speeder with great surprise. Then he jumped into the Ford police car, his jaw champing mechanically as though it were not part of him. He spun the car around and went up on the side walk and knocked over an ash can. Finally he got organized and took off with siren at full blast.

"Fearless Fosdick rides again," Arch said.

"He won't catch him."

"Nah. That Buick'll be in Berea before the Keystone Kops are even out of town."

We ambled down Main Street. We stopped to look at a store window and Arch said: "I'm about due for a cup of coffee."

"Have you been in the cough-drop factory recently?" I said.

"No. Come to think of it, I haven't worked a cross-word puzzle in a long time either."

"What do you mean, cross-word?"

"Every time I go in there Jim Luden makes me help him with a cross-word."

"I guess he does have a lot of time on his hands."

"Yeah. Can't spell worth a damn though. Gets all fouled up."

"Let's go," I said. "I haven't had any of his coffee in a long time. It'll make me appreciate the good stuff."

* * *

The Perpetual Motion Cafe was like a box of dull aluminum, banded on three sides with windows. There were two signs on the ribbon of glass. One made the confident statement: PERPETUAL MOTION CAFE — WE NEVER CLOSE. The other read: CONEY ISLANDS 15¢. The diner was on a corner, bounded by a parking lot. Directly across was a deserted lot, part of the grounds of the high school on the hill.

It was still hot. It hadn't rained yet. Inside there was a fan going but it wasn't cool. The floor was dry and gritty and even the air felt gritty. All the fan did was pick up the air and move it around.

"Well, here's my old buddy, Arch," Jim Luden said.

He was working on a cross-word puzzle. He was a thin pale man in a yellowish panama and a green slack-suit. His pale, almost white, nose hooked over an uneven pencil line moustache. There was an unlit cigarette in the corner of his mouth.

"What'll it be, boys?" he said.

"Coffee," Arch said.

"Ditto," I said.

Jim Luden poured steaming India ink into two mugs. I put two spoons of sugar and a lot of cream into mine. Usually I take only one sugar and no cream but I had had coffee there before. Arch took his black. He had a Keg-Lined stomach.

"Worked any cross-words lately, Jim?" Arch said.

"Why, I'm working on one right now."

"Jeeze, you've got one of those Courier-Journal things."

"Yeah. And it's a sweetheart."

The phone rang, Jim listened and scrawled on a ticket with a greasy

pencil stub. "Four hamburgers," he said. "Three doughnuts. And two cokes. To go to the hall, room 69."

He handed the order thru the window to the cook. Then he picked up the phone again. "One hundred, please." Pause. "This is the Perpetual Motion Cafe. Send a cab over to pick up some stuff for the hall."

"Now, Arch, old friend, let's look at this cross-word."

"Give it here," Arch said. "I'll fill those words that are in all the puzzles. See, here's the South American three-toed sloth."

I tasted my coffee; it was still too hot. Outside it began to rain softly.

"Four-letter word meaning a sea-eagle," Arch said.

A car stopped and a cabby came in. "Got the stuff for the hall ready, Jim?" he said.

"Sure." Jim handed him a paper sack stained with grease. "Room 69. Have a cup of coffee on me."

"O.K. You pour it now and put it in the ice-box and I'll come back in a couple hours and drink it. I like my coffee just at the boiling point."

"Two-letter word meaning a Siamese coin," Arch said.

It was beginning to rain harder now. It was still hot. The fly-browned dial of the big clock read 11:45. The glass had been broken; a shard still remained.

A short fat man in a wrinkled linen suit came in and sat down by me. "Coffee," he said. He had a speech impediment. He tended to stutter and slur his words.

"Whatime ish id?" he asked me.

"11:47."

"The hell you say. Itsh 12:45 by my watsh."

"You're on fast time."

"Fasstime. Whaday ish thish?"

"It's Friday," I said.

"Friday? How can id be Friday? Thawas yesherdai."

"Well, tomorrow's Saturday."

"No. Itsh after twelve so **todaysh** Saturday."

"That's right. You've got to allow for the international date-line."

He stood up and slipped on an invisible banana skin. He caught himself on the screen door. "Thash ri.' Today ish today. An' tomorrow ish . . . tomorrow. Itsh alwaysh today," he sobbed. "It ain't never gonna be tomorrow."

"You've spelled this wrong," Arch said. "It should be c-u-r-i-e. You've got c-u-r-r-y."

"Do you get many like that?" I said.

"Not as many as you'd think," Jim Luden said.

"He had a hide full O.K."

"Yeah. He'll crawl over into the lot and sleep it off or else the Key-stoners'll get him."

It began to rain harder.

"Looks like you'd get all the drunks since you're open all night," I said.

"Hell, they know better than to come around here. Arch, how we coming?"

Arch said: "We need a three-letter word meaning 'hail.' I have every-thing else in."

"A three-letter word meaning 'hail.' " Jim said.

"Give me another cup of coffee, Jim," I said.

"Ice," Jim said.

"Sure," Arch said. "That's it." He wrote it in. "I'll be damned. It doesn't fit."

It began to rain as hard as it could. It was still hot.

"We're marooned, Arch," I said.

"We are for a fact," he said.

"What in hell is that word?" Luden said.

I played Spike Jones' William Tell Overture on the juke box.

"That's that old Feedlebaum record, ain't it?" Jim said.

"Yeah. Look at it rain. If that drunk's out there in the lot, I bet he's having a rough time."

"Yeah," Jim said. "The only time I get many drunks in here is after those college dances."

"Anybody ever try to start something?"

"They know better. A guy gave me a big challenge the other night but—" he reached under the counter and brought up a .45 automatic—"I took this out and said, 'All right, you son of a bitch, let's go outside.' He took off like a big bird."

Rain. Lots of rain. We were in a glass box at the bottom of a water-fall. Jim came around the counter and put a slug in the juke box.

"Life gets tedious," the record said.

"It sure as hell does," I said.

"This bifurcated puzzle . . ." Arch muttered, chewing his pipe stem.

"That rain'll save me from washing off the sidewalk tomorrow," Jim said.

"The heck with it," Arch said.

"Give it here," I said. "Let's see . . . a three-letter word meaning 'hail.' Hale and Hearty. Buy your hail insurance now. Hail, hail, the gang's all here. Gad, Watson, this is intriguing! Hail the conquering . . . Hail, Caesar. That's it. Ave Caesar! et cetera et cetera."

"What's the good word?" Arch said.

"Ave. Latin word. Amo amas amat. And there's your puzzle, Jim."

"Yeah," Jim said. "There it is. Durn 'em, why don't those people write their puzzles in English?"

"That's the breaks," I said. "What the hail."

"It's stopped raining," Arch said.

It had stopped. We walked up the hill toward the college. The streets were dark and shiny with the damp. It was still August. It was still hot.

OBLIGATION

Jim Barrickman

I love the ceaseless patter of the rain.
It drums its song upon the sleeping Earth,
As if to wash away all thought of pain
And end our striving. For the striving's worth
No more than just the price that it might pay.
I love the low soft moaning of the wind.
Its almost noiseless passage seems to say,
"Come, wander, leave Fame to its own dull end!"
The wind and rain may wander as they please.
I must, at lamps of Truth, my vigil swear.
For having strayed, I would, like one who sees
A flash, see nothing after save the glare.
There is no place for me on distant strands.
My place is here, where solid Knowledge stands.

TIPPING

Edward Casebolt

From the poor shoe shine boy on the neighborhood corner to the suave head waiter at the swanky Waldorf-Astoria Roof Gardens, a multitude of beggars harangues the people of the United States with a pestilence worse than any which ever swept across the plains of Kansas or Nebraska. Sticking out at them from every source are greedy hands and false smiles waiting for but one thing—the tip.

Consider the average day in the life of any American. He leaves his home in the morning just a little too late to enjoy the stroll to his office, so he must hail a taxi. This shouldn't cost more than fifty cents, but he must include an extra ten cents for the driver. Before entering his place of busi-

ness, he is greeted by a cheery newspaper boy to whom he surrenders—not too unwillingly—five cents with an extra nickel for the boy himself.

With a peace of mind that he has done right with the world, this average man works quite contentedly until he is interrupted by an invitation to go to lunch. This is where he really feels the sting in his pocketbook and begins to wonder whether his hard-earned money is being relieved of him for a worthy service. Including the twenty-five cents he left for the waitress who smiled at him in the restaurant and the quarter he gave to the pearly-toothed Negro who put an "extra shine" on his shoes, he was allowed to escape rather easily. Perhaps he will be free from reaching for his small change for the rest of the day—that is, unless his wife decides to take him dining and dancing for the evening. Not to be tabbed as a "piker," he will give of his own free will and accord, not having to be coerced or under duress, at least ten per cent of the total bill—a dollar, let us say.

Poor Mr. Average American goes to bed that night about two dollars less the richer just for the sake of having the reputation as a "good guy" in the minds of a few petty beggars who each year obtain billions of dollars from the pocketbooks of our nation's citizens. And they do this because most of us are too spineless to think twice and recollect that the fellow who is holding out his hand is being paid a salary which, more than likely, is equal to what the rest of us are earning. More than one of these waitresses or caterers has a shiny automobile and a beautiful home in which to live.

There seems to be no Moses who will lead us out of these conventional doldrums of passing out money to everyone who doffs his hat, smiles, and pays us some compliment while he does some menial service which we could do very easily ourselves. Consequently, I will continue to follow the masses and reach for my pocketbook every time you do when we leave our table in the restaurant.

AUSPICIOUS SILENCE

Charles L. Combs

Silence is a peaceful place,
Where dreaming children futures plan;
Where every man who is a man
Has wrestled quietly with his fate.

Silence is a place of rest
Where men retire in gentle sleep
When darkness on the day does creep
And all the worst turns for the best.

Silence maintains every soul;
And calms temptation's raging storm;
It mends the spirit when it's worn
And helps each mind to bear its load.

Silence is the mind's laboratory
Where ignorance looks but may not see;
Just wonders how things come to be
And never knows of glory.

In silence my mind and soul find ease
As I wander on the leas.
Such a wonder cannot cease;
Leaving God and All to me.

Let not it sear your tender heart
When clay will press my lifeless form
Without me cocks announce the morn
And of silence I become a part.

SCHOOLROOM MEDITATIONS

Mary E. Moore

Greyhound buses, a hurrying car,
Oh, how lucky I think they are!
Those scurrying people on the street
With their aching bones and tired feet
Probably wish, too, that they
Were on that bus, running away
From humdrum life, and sorrows, and care.
Caring not they go, nor where.
And I, seated here in my schoolroom seat,
Wish I could be one on the street
Who stands and watches with nothing to do,
Instead of working here shut from the view.
Lessons and tests—how hard they seem!
But I, I sit in my seat and dream.
Of the day when I, too, will be out of college
And then I, too, for all my knowledge,
Every time I pass this building by,
Will look up at it and give this sigh—
“Oh, how I wish that I were there,
Seated in class, in my old scratched chair!”

SOMETIMES

J. L. Watson

Why do I sometimes ponder
And lose my thoughts to lightly wander
Across these lovely hills and dales
To find repose in homey vales;
To wade and play in shallow brooks,
And search for gold in crannied nooks;
To hold the bands of childhood friends,
And look for Indians in the glens;
To pluck the violets so blue and bold
And lady slippers of burnished gold?

I found pure gold in that crannied nook,
And from those vales I carefully took
The memories of the childhood friends
That loved to romp in shady glens.

LINES FROM A CYNIC

Robert C. Points

Standing upon a mountain peak,
Looking down for what I seek,
I turn my gaze to and fro,
Seeing only what I saw below,
Reaching for the vaulted sky,
Finding it is much too high.

Oh why, why, should I climb
If it's only wasted time,
If life is but a pantomime?
A wasted life is the greatest crime.
Seek success—embrace the penny;
Lofty ideals are not for many.

MIDNIGHT

Jim Barrickman

It's midnight—
The cold, blue-silver moonlight covers
the frosty, sleeping world.
I write—
Because my mind will give my body no
rest.
I wonder—
With the mind's disregard of distance, time.
The places I have seen, the people I have met,
and known, and loved—
The things that I have said, and done.
The things that I must say, and do.
They must be perfect.
I cannot fail.
Too many have climbed toward success, and
light
And then have fallen with their goal in sight.
Oh God! Help me!

SNOWFALL

Laura Virginia Roberts

Outside—(I cannot see it, but I know—)
The snow is falling heavily,
Collecting itself into a blanket
To cover my world.
To cleanse my world perhaps?
No, to cover it.
The white flakes gather themselves
Glistening, and fall upon the world
And hide the ugliness;
The hillsides—the trees—cease to be bare;
An intended garden—a garbage heap—
Become a frosted wonderland and
A gem-encrusted obelisk;
A squalid cabin is the gingerbread
Cottage—sugar coated; and a
Poor man's yard or two of lawn
Is sprinkled with diamonds.
The snow falls silently
And covers the ugliness—
It does not cleanse.

NEW ORLEANS

Marjorie Combs West

We walked down the too-narrow streets and alleyways. The old brick buildings sitting flush against the street with their second floors hemmed in by worn iron fillagree housed the Cajuns, the French, the Spanish, and the Mulattoes and Negroes of New Orleans.

The French markets were a block long with concession stands, meat markets and fruit and vegetable markets owned by Mr. Montagne, Mr. Martinni, and Mr. De Silva. The stench of the markets formed a convincing atmosphere for the cries of "Fresh shrimp," "Mackerel," and "Herring." Low utterances of "Oui," "Sil vous plait" and a gruff "Vaya usted inferno" in complaint of the high prices made the market New Orleans' Tower of Babel.

We walked on past Arnaud's, Antoine's, and The Court of Two Sisters.

It was almost unbelievable that these apparent warehouses could house the restaurants and patios peculiar to New Orleans.

The modern neon-lighted sign of the Old Absinth House flicked on and off in the distance in contrast to the worn brick building with its unpainted and unhinged shutters. The classic French architecture and degradation of the building offered a convincing argument for the legend of Washington's and Lafayette's frequent visitations.

Just up Pirate's Alley and to the left we found the Museum of Natural History. The glass-encased costumes of many past Mardi Gras kings and queens brought visions of pre-lenten festivities—floats that made the four-lane Canal Street look over-crowded, men that had exchanged their modern masculinity for satin and velvet robes, beautiful women—their beauty complemented by the dress and customs of an old French court, papier-mache dummies, confetti, noise-makers and the mobs of people fighting and pushing for a glimpse of all these.

On to a haven for all the Mallorys, O'Houlihans, O'Haras and Maloneys—Pat O'Brien's in the central part of the French Quarter. The patio, the Spanish music, the wishing-well, and the dimly lit walkways were a reflection of the French influence rather than that of the blarney-stone.

As we walked away from the French Quarter and down the brick-paved sidewalk, a streetcar rumbled by with the placard marked D-E-S-I-R-E. It was the "Streetcar Named Desire" that Tennessee Williams has made immortal in his play of life in the French Quarter.

We walked slowly and regretfully on as the familiar strains of "Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?" were heard from a honky-tonk nearby.

REGRET

Laura Virginia Roberts

I think upon the springs
that we have wasted,
And made into desolate winters:
I think of gentle words
That you have failed to say,
And songs I failed to sing;
I think on all the gay notes
Turned to dirges,
And all the smiles we turned to tears.
I ponder on lost words and smiles
And songs unsung,
And weep again for wasted years.

INVITATION

Leonor B. Adams

Can you recall Kentucky in the spring,
The crimson flash of Cardinals a-wing,
The dogwood's starry-eyed frigidity,
And hazy-purple shower of red-bud tree?

Can you revive that sensuous delight
When lilac-scented air perfumed the night.
And moonlight filtering through the maple leaves
Made harlequins of two beneath the trees?

Do you not miss this resurrection-spell
In that one-season land where now you dwell?
Come back, and of this magic essence, drink.
Return, my dear, it's later than you think!

HER FIRST LOVE

Jovita R. Varias

"Ramon," she said in a soft, happy tune, "you have inspired me to write and . . ."

Since Flora had blossomed to her teens and outgrown the elementary school in her home town, her aunt in Manila took her to the city to study. For several years she was not allowed to go back to the province until the death of her grandfather. During the *pamisa* or nine nights of prayer traditionally observed by Filipinos after the burial of their dead, the relatives and friends of Flora's late grandfather came with their friends and acquaintances. While their elders talked of economic disorder as they played cards among themselves, the young boys and girls grouped in a corner for a game known as "The King of Paris has lost his crown." The participants were given such romantic names as *Irog Ko* (My Dear), *Ikaw Kaya* (Can It Be You), *Nasaan Ka* (Where Are You), etc.

It was there that Ramon and Flora first met. Flora, now a typical Filipina beauty wearing her hair in two long braids that almost reached her ankle, looked very innocent and beautiful in her sheer black dress. During the course of the game, Flora or *Irog Ko*, as she was named, was most often called, especially by Ramon. At the end of the game, those who were caught were made either to sing, declaim, or tell anecdotes. Flora giggled and laughed with the other girls as they listened to the songs and jokes of those who were punished.

Ramon's turn came. He was asked to sing. As he stood up and smiled good-naturedly, Flora became aware of his handsome face, dark curly hair and tall, slim body. Her laughter ceased, for she felt a mysterious leap in her heart. Ramon began singing a *kundiman*. His eyes strayed to the audience and rested at Flora. There was a deepening blush in Flora's lovely face.

After his song, Ramon found a seat beside Flora. "Are you studying?" he opened a conversation with her.

"Yes, in one of Manila's public high schools. How about you?" she returned the interrogation.

"I'm taking medicine," he said. "What are you going to take after graduating from the high school?" he asked, somewhat encouraged this time by her frankness.

"I'll take either voice culture or journalism."

"Fine, I like any of the two. So you too love music. How did you like my song?"

"It was beautiful," she said, crimson rushing to her cheeks again.

"Thank you for the compliments," he said, quite flattered.

When Ramon said goodnight to her, he felt, as they were shaking hands, that Flora's soft fingers were slightly trembling.

The next day, Flora packed up for the city. She was to catch up with her classes, for the time was early in June. The memory of the previous night kept lingeringly haunting her.

"Is this what Dorothy Dix calls 'mere infatuation'?" Flora paused and asked herself. Only a leap in her heart that brought her back again that night's scene answered her own question. She knew then definitely that cupid had pierced an arrow into her young tender heart, and for the first time.

The school year was over. She went back to the province. Home again. One evening, she and her sister went for an after-supper walk "just around in the next corner."

"Good evening," came a voice from behind where the hedges were high. It surprised Flora, and when the owner of that voice came out where the moonlight revealed his becoming face, she could hardly believe her own eyes, for to her it seemed a dream at first, but it was really Ramon now catching up and walking beside her.

"Well. How did you happen to . . ." Flora could only gasp. "We did not notice the hiding place from where you emerged so suddenly."

"I came with the breeze, when the moon calls me not. This is a lovely evening. And here we are." Flora heard him sing, not say, every word of it.

Overhead, the pale moon seemed to enchant the night, and as the three walked slowly homeward, the fragrance of *dama-de-noche* filled the cool evening air.

"Good night. I hope to see you soon again," Ramon bade them as they reached the fence gate of the house. Flora took a step up their yard which was elevated from the street. Ramon came near her just below the step. His oval face beamed with his characteristic smiles as he looked up to her. That was the last she saw of him during that vacation—a closeup of his oval, smiling face.

Flora went back to the city again, this time nursing the memory of that night in the pale moonlight. Secretly, and alone, she knew that she was in love now with Ramon.

Flora's inclination to writing had found an opening petal in her first flowering experience of love. One night, after a hard try on her first short story, she retired to bed. Just as her tired eyes were ready to close, she overheard the boisterous voice of a relative from the home town. He talked of Ramon's approaching marriage.

To Flora's tender heart, that harmless piece of news was a painful stab. She tried to laugh in spite of the pain. After all, she was not really his sweetheart—there was no definite understanding between them as yet. "In fact, he has not even told me so if he loves me," Flora tried to reason it out in defense of herself. But despite all of it, she could not abide with that reason. She could not sleep now. She remained tossing over her pillow, each time to be choked by her tears. And she was able to sleep only after she reversed her pillow, and prayed . . . prayed hard for him, too.

She was determined to keep her trouble to herself alone. She tried to maintain her high spirit, but her fingers unconsciously betrayed sadness in the feeling of their master as they sought sentimental notes on the piano keys which had become her constant companion more than ever now. It was there beside the piano that she tried to find solace one late afternoon.

There she was very lonely. In broken whisper, in blurred eyes bedewed with tears, she was saying, "Why did you come to disappear too soon, to build a fire and then put it out with your own cruel hands." To which only the sad, dying notes that her own fingers had produced from touch that revealed protestation from their master, replied to remind her of solitude. But with the pains in her heart, there was a mingling sweetness that she was willing to bear.

She rose from the piano stool, and went to the window. Her eyes strayed down the sidewalk. There was the colonnade of *dama-de-noche*, that reminded her of scented night, of pale moon overhead, of a stroll around the corner . . . and Ramon, way back in the province not long ago. This recollection had taken much of her concentration, and when her slim bosom heaved to breathe the fresh evening air, the memory had slipped back, lost again in her sigh, and she was alone there again against the thickening dusk of twilight.

When Ramon was scanning the pages of a weekly magazine, his attention was attracted by the title of a short story, "Her First Love." He gazed intently at the picture of the author at the upper left corner of the page. "Flora," he greeted the picture; then glancing back below the title, he read aloud, "Her First Love, by Flora de Gamaliel."

Ramon was so engrossed in reading the story that every now and then he drew short, irregular breaths; for he was the hero in the story, and the author herself the heroine. He was the faithless man. Flora, the innocent victim of a broken heart.

"But at last, she has succeeded in writing," he muttered. "All that I have been expecting from her." Ramon hurriedly went to dress. He tucked

the magazine under his arm. To Flora's house he knocked at the door, gently—no, quite excitedly.

"Come in," he heard a voice as the door simply opened. "Oh! why . . ." Flora was pale, almost frightened.

"Flora!" he exclaimed, handing the magazine to her. "I always knew you could do it. I mean, that you can really write." Then holding her arms, he drew nearer.

"Thanks," she said, drooping her eyelids where they became more beautiful as sadness expressed their mute language. "It's very kind of you coming here and still manifest your interest in the things that I do even though you are now a married man," Flora said, retreating and trying to free her hands from his hold.

"Flora, but I still . . ."

"I heard all about it. Please go."

"Believe me, Flora, please. I am not married. It is my cousin Ramon C. Ramasanta who married Julita Conde. Not me—I am Ramon D. Ramasanta."

Ramon's eyes were searching hers. Flora became immovable, but her eyes were wet. "You're crying, Flora. Don't you believe me that I love you? That's why I have come?"

"Ramon," she said in a soft, happy tune, "you have inspired me to write."

"I am glad that I have done one thing for you, Flora," he said, and their eyes met.

REFLECTIONS

Joan L. Willenbrink

I suppose I must now face reality!
All hopes of reconciliation
Have been shattered
Like a broken mirror—
The reflection gone,
Except for the images left in our hearts.

THIRTY DOLLARS A WEEK

Anne Epperson

"Hurry, John," Mary rushed nervously around the room gathering shirts and socks to stuff into his overnight bag.

"Damn!" came a yelp from the bathroom.

"You haven't got time to cut your stupid self, now hurry."

John rushed into the bedroom with a piece of tissue paper on his chin. "Get the car out. I'll finish dressing on the way to the station."

In a few minutes Mary had the car sitting in front of the house and John, tie and socks in hand, was running down the path.

He jumped into the car, slammed the door, and Mary flung the gear into second.

"John, why in blazes did you ever decide to move to the country? I know you are going to miss the 12:04 and another express doesn't leave until 1:32 and that will be too late to catch your plane."

"Will you stop yelping," said John as he turned the mirror to see to knot his tie. "I couldn't stand the smell of your cats in that three-room apartment."

"Country, bah! Fresh air fiend," muttered Mary as she screeched around a curve on two wheels.

"Look, honey, we'll never live to see the station if you don't lift your sweet little foot off that accelerator."

Mary glanced at her husband. "That vice-presidency may not mean anything to you, but an extra thirty dollars a week sure would ease the budget."

As John tied his shoestrings he thought, "Nag, nag, nag. Seems like she ought to be grateful for what I've done for her—pitiful though my attempt. She got this stinking job for me, and now she wants me to own the company. A modern Lady Macbeth."

"Put on your coat; we're here."

Pulling on his coat, John ran to the ticket office. As Mary came up to them she saw the station master shake his head and point to the north where 12:04 was disappearing around the bend of the hill.

They walked slowly back to the station wagon. During the ride back John glanced at his wife. "From the expression on her face," he thought, "you'd think I paid to have the train leave at 11:59, just so I'd miss it."

The ride was made in silence. Back at the house John changed his clothes and ruefully examined the cut on his chin. He went down to the living-room where Mary sat knitting, fast and furiously.

John groaned inwardly. "That's a bad sign. When Mary knits, Mary's mad."

"Look, honey—," he started.

"Shut up," she snapped. "If you had told me sooner that you had to catch that train, all this wouldn't have happened."

"But, Mary," he began again.

"Please, John, I don't want to talk about it. It's easy to see thirty dollars a month floating out the window on your fresh country air."

They sat there for an hour. Mary knitted and John glanced through *Esquire*. He chuckled every now and then to make her think that he didn't care whether she was mad or not.

Finally, Mary jumped up and turned on the radio. The announcer's voice rushed into the still room. "Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt this program to bring you a special bulletin. Six persons were killed and fourteen injured when the northbound express which left Willow Springs for Big City at 12:04 collided with the southbound Mockingbird, which was bound for Washington. The collision occurred at 12:30 this morning. We have no further—."

Mary clicked off the radio. Slowly she turned to face John and tears began falling over her nose. When he saw the horror on her face, he rushed and put his arms around her.

She looked up at him. "Oh, John, this is the first time I've ever thought of not having you."

Suddenly he knew there would be no more nagging—for awhile. "Why," he thought, "if she smiles now and then, I may even be able to stand her cats."

WHY BOTHER WITH BEAUTY AIDS?

Clara Watts

As knights in the days of old, women are also conducting a quest, not for the Holy Grail, but for youth and beauty. The limits to which we go in order to reach, or even vaguely approximate, this goal, produce situations worse than trial by ordeal. Oh, that we might find that magical elixir believed to be the Fountain of Eternal Youth!

The department stores of our cities lie in wait for us. They line their shelves with creams, lotions, and mud-packs designed to brighten eyes, tighten skin, and prevent a double chin. They beguile us with rouges, powders, mascara, and even eye-lash curlers. We are tantalized by perfumes guaranteed to bring that Man reeling to your side, insensible of everything except your amazing appeal. And we accept most of them as the basic essentials of proper dress. Would any of us venture out without lipstick on except in case of fire?

Because a good figure is another essential of society today, dieting is a form of self-torture in which women indulge. We pass by sweets, starches, fats, and, in fact, all of the good foods in favor of wheat breads, lettuce, and fruit juices. We increase our discomfort even more by strenuous exercises

guaranteed by their originators to give us figures like those of Turner and Hayworth.

It is not enough to have a lovely face and figure. It is our duty to bake ourselves slowly on all sides in order to achieve the sun-tan that convention says is a must at this time of year. Only after much burning and peeling do we feel we can face life in the New Look dresses.

Perhaps the most horrible trial that we undergo for beauty is the permanent wave. Permanent waves come as cold waves, heat waves, and machine permanents. The Inquisition torture devices were hardly comparable with a permanent waving machine. After having had our hair cut, shaped, and bathed in lotion, we are attached to the machine. The curlers are let down to be attached to our heads, but after attachment they spring back up leaving us in a more or less Absalom-like attitude. During the steaming process we usually get burned on the neck or (and) one or more fingers.

Next comes the waving, or setting, naturally in an ultra-modern style. After that, we are once more placed under a heating apparatus, this time known as a drier. If we haven't been burned by this time, we will be now.

Later that night we carefully dress, add make-up, and give a last minute fluff to our hair. We are ready for the arrival of our One and Only. We eagerly anticipate his reaction to our store-bought beauty. Does he give us the desired result? Not him! Most likely he will say, "Say, honey, I liked the way you wore your hair last night."

I ask you, why bother with beauty aids? Darn men, anyhow!

THE MONSTER

James Wert

For three long days the blizzard had howled around the little cabin high in the Sierras, piling snow roof-high on the windward side. For three long days the twisted pines had creaked and groaned in protest against the heavy blanket of snow and ice that slowly overwhelmed them. And now in the hush that follows the storm, everything lay white and lifeless. Only in the cabin was there life—the fireplace cracking as it consumed its pine logs, the two hunters watching tensely from their hiding places. Yes, only the cabin held life—life and the Monster.

It was Dave who first saw the Monster. At the first approach of the storm, Dave had been stacking huge piles of firewood by the door of the cabin, and he swore he had seen the Monster's long, scaly tail slipping through the door. Ben ridiculed the idea. It was impossible. Where could it hide in the bare unfurnished cabin? Under sleeping blankets spread on the dirt floor? Behind the meager supply of groceries cached in the corner? As they carefully chinked each crack against the ever-growing fury of the wind, they agreed that the Monster was non-existent.

Yet on the next morning both men knew that he did exist. The tear in the flour-sack, the gnawing of the bacon slab were mute evidence of his presence. But not until that night did he make himself visible. This time it was Ben who saw him. Ben, rising on elbow from his blanket, saw the Monster looming large and ferocious against the background of the flames, with its long scaly tail twitching from its furry body and its large coal black eyes gleaming evilly at the men prone on the floor. Ben with the instinctive motion of the hunter hurled his hunting knife with force and accuracy at the Monster. It was a direct hit, Ben insisted, but the Monster was gone and no trace of blood stained the knife-blade. Then it was that Ben christened this existing, non-existent creature, the Monster.

As the raging of the storm kept the men snowbound the second day, they made a minute search of the cabin. Dividing the small cabin into sections, they made as painstaking a search as if the Monster were an ant, which could hide under a speck of dirt, a grain of pepper. With the cabin chinked so tightly that not even a breath of the howling blizzard could find its way inside, the Monster had disappeared. Yet in the night he reappeared.

Again Ben saw him against the flames, again he hurled his knife, again the Monster simply disappeared.

The Monster was there! Dave saw him momentarily in the early morning light. Confined to their cabin by the cruel winds outside, the men planned a new search of the cabin. Their few possessions were moved and carefully examined. The very pine needles on the floor were inspected with microscopic carefulness, and ridiculous as it seemed, there was no trace of the Monster. The Monster was a myth, yet it was real—real because he came again that night. This time Dave hurled his knife unerringly at the target and once again the Monster disappeared.

Now, in the calm that followed the storm, the men carefully laid their plans. No fear of the Monster motivated them. These men were hunters, trappers, wanderers of the lonesome mountains, and the Monster represented a challenge that must be met. Its apparent invisibility was a reflection on their woodcraft. Only death or capture could wipe out this stain upon their hunting ability. Since it appeared only at night, Dave took his position on a plank laid on the crossbraces of the rafters. With shotgun in his hand he commanded the entire area in front of the fireplace. In a far corner out of Dave's range, Ben, waiting tensely for the appearance of the Monster, leveled a rifle at the fireplace.

Night came, minutes ticked slowly into eternity, then suddenly the Monster was there. Neither man saw him come, but unbelievably there he stood, with one foot placed tentatively on Ben's new hunting boots that had been set to one side of the fireplace. The two guns roared as one, as both men became aware of his presence. The Monster lay dead and the stain on the hunters' woodcraft had now been removed.

"You know, Ben," drawled Dave, "I'm sorry we killed him. He gave us something to do during the blizzard.

"Well," answered Ben as he carefully examined the tattered remains of his new boots, "it would have been a dern-site cheaper for me if we had remembered to bring a mousetrap."

OPERATION 6—10—2

Mary E. Moore

Gosh, women are silly! They think housework and taking care of the baby is hard. Why, I could do all Mary does in half a day and play golf in the afternoon. Taking care of the baby is a plain pleasure—Oh! I guess I spoke too soon.

There, there, darling, your bottle's almost ready. **Please** don't scream so. I know you're hungry. Oh, what a mother you've got! Why isn't she back yet? The Navy didn't train me for this.

"The bottle's in the icebox," she says. "Do you know what to do with it?"

"Sure," I says.

This is what I get for being so cocky. Serves me right.

Oh, darling—sweetheart—Gregory! Why do you have to do this to me? You never screamed at your mother like this. O.K., O.K., O.K.—I'll get your bottle. Only take a breath, will you? The neighbors will think I'm killing you.

Let's see, you test it on your wrist, I guess. Shake it like this—ou-u! Hm, too hot. Well, put it in cold water. Oh, baby, baby, will I be glad when Mother gets home! Maybe if I shut your door—Whew! He just yells louder—that milk ought to be cool by now—I'm coming, darn it!

All right—come to Papa, sweetheart. There, there, calm down now. Here, try this for size. Well, close your mouth on it, you little nut. How do you expect to get anywhere screaming your lungs out? Ah—got a taste of it, did you?

Noisy son-of-a-gun, aren't you? I might as well teach you better manners while I'm at it. No time to start like now. You're sucking at that nipple as if it were your last meal on earth.

Every time you do that I'm going to take the bottle out of your mouth. How do you like that? Uh—perhaps we'd better postpone the lessons until you're a little older. I said we'd postpone the lessons for today! Take this darn thing!

I'm sorry, honest—I didn't mean it. Shucks, I know I'm just your father, but don't make an issue of it.

Let's see how much you've taken. Um—two and a half ounces, and four is all you get. Aren't you supposed to burp, or something? Oh, yes. Well, over my shoulder you go. Stop screaming—you'll get the rest of it.

What are you waiting for? I'm patting your back like crazy. Come now, a nice gentlemanly burp—tch, tch, tch, that was enough to have me thrown out of the mess hall, but we'll forgive you. Now, here's the rest of the bottle.

What's the matter? Have you gone "on the wagon"? You screamed bloody murder for this a second ago. Open your mouth, doggone it. You're going to finish this if it finishes me. Oh, thank you, your Lordship. It's darn decent of you to nibble at this for me. Hmph! I don't make much of an impression on you, do I?

Well—that's it, fella. That's all there is—there isn't any more, as the saying goes, so scream your head off.

Doggone, I'm talking to myself. Look at the little darling—asleep right in my arms! Isn't he beautiful? You know, I think Mother was right. He does sort of look like me at that!

Exhausted from his trial, Paul could hardly drag himself to his favorite chair in the living room. Mary found him there asleep when she arrived a short time later.

She smiled as she noticed his disheveled hair and tired look, and wondered if he still considered her job a "snap."

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FOREWORD

With the aim and standard of previous volumes in mind, the editors present the sixteenth annual volume of *Belles Lettres* to the many readers among their fellow-students, the faculty, and other friends of the college.

INDIFFERENCE

Laura V. Roberts

The convenient indifference
Which I call my own—
With which I successfully cover the aching—
Has fallen away.
The fire is warm and sends
Its mellow glow about the room;
Indifference somehow seems quite
Out of place, and only aching
Loneliness must feel at home.
Tomorrow, I will build again,
Against the storm.
Tomorrow I will build against
The ache which will come
When next you smile;
Against the tears which will come
When next you walk away;
Tomorrow I will build indifference—
Perhaps even hate—but I will build
So that the night—cold outside
But warm firelight within—
Cannot make me betray the ache . . .
No! I will build so that there is no ache.
Tomorrow I will build so strongly
That the memory of you will cause no pain;
So that no warmth or love—
So that no beautiful music, or hill in spring,
Will bring the melancholy of your
Words to haunt me . . .
Tomorrow I will build against you—
But tonight . . .

FARMHOUSE FROM A HILL

Howard M. Rowlette

Trim it lay in all its sprawling juttings
Both angular and curved. Squatting fowl fashion
Upon the rich dark ground.
Suckling its life, from that same solid soil
Surrounded by its many outhouses
Reeking royally of innumerable odors;
Meretriciously snuggled 'neath verdant tree growth.
Lolling lazily out to the hazy horizon
A beautiful bountiness, the vital variety of viands.
Turbulent traceries of foliage.
Delicate dandelions dance in pastures green;
Of flowers withered in woodland haunt.
A perfect serenity.

A THOUGHT

Alfred V. Fields

An autumn leaf, unfelt, unfed,
Drops from its perch onto earth's bed—
In slumber sleeps, unknown its end;
A life complete—why question right?
Each day must blink its eyes in night;
One must go down who can't ascend.

STORM IN RETROSPECT

Shirley DeSimone

Long since, I walked along a lonely way;
The land wherein I walked was strange to me.
The fields stretched far around, a saddened sea
Of dusty winter brown. The sky was grey.
The wind and roadside dust began to play,
The night-time clouds came flying black and free,
Foretelling storm to come. No house or tree
In sight. The earth and sky had me for prey.
The bitter solitude I still can feel,
As rain drove down and hurt me with its sting.
The wind that blows on lonely ones has steel
In it to cut the soul, and it can bring
Them to their knees, unless they hear the peal
Of some strong brother's voice, to help them sing.

A CAVALIER

Robert Frank Cayton

From some nondescript land of sorcery,
thou ridest upon a regal, prancing steed
over the hill and up the road,
dusted lightly with gold crushed
from the worn doubloon
cast carelessly on dark velvet.
Thou art a confident cavalier
resplendent in onyx cloth
with a scarlet-lined cape
whipping behind thee
in the cool, distilled night air.

And when I run reluctantly
to throw open the latch-gate,
I am not frightened,
though glimmers of the old doubloon
touch thy stark face.
O, thou art never grim to me.

And when I must go with thee
to that unperceived land,
I shall mount the charger thou bringest,
and proudly ride away with thee.
I have no cause to fear thee,
no cause to fear thee ever.

RAT POISON

Marjorie C. West

The moaning saxophone egged on the coupling gestures of the dancers, as the neon sign outside the "21 Bar" blinked slowly on and off, alternately bathing the tiny room with a red, then, a green light.

I walked past the "21," stopped, and, hesitating, turned and retraced my steps. Still unsure, I paused for a moment, and then, with a burst of reassurance, shoved open the wooden-paneled door.

The long, mirrored bar on the right as I entered was well-stocked with everything but customers. One man sat alone staring down at his empty

glass, as would a fortune teller at her crystal ball. It was doubtful, however, that his fixed stare evoked the jingling of the telephone that a few minutes later broke the stillness at the bar.

Joe, the bartender, with a look of disgust, laid down the big beer mug, put the towel on the bar, and rubbing his hands along his white apron, ambled back to the telephone booth.

The repeated ringing stopped, and a few seconds later, Joe, still unhurried, stepped out of the phone booth, and called to the stranger, "Your name Adams?"

"Yeh, sure is," he replied, jumping down from the high chrome bar stool with a new enthusiasm.

I had taken a seat at the bar, and, with a grin, watched Joe walk slowly back, each step more dreadedly taken than the last.

Joe finally retrieved his towel, his beer mug, and his pleasantness, and with a look across the bar, greeted me. "Hi, Mr. Kennedy. Thought ya' wasn't goin' to make it."

"Better late than never, I guess," I retorted. "That sweetly foolish wife of mine called me at the office and told me to go by the drug store. She said not to hurry home, but I know how she is when she's waiting for something." I continued, "Guess I really shouldn't have stopped by here, but tonight it's for just one drink."

"Now, Mr. Kennedy, that's no way to talk."

"Yeh, Joe, just one tonight. Ya' know the only trouble my wife and I have ever had has been over my drinking. She knows that when I stop anywhere for one drink, I try to drink the place dry before I stagger home."

Joe's disgusted countenance had been adopted by the bar's other occupant as he came walking out of the phone booth. "That woman keeps me waiting all afternoon, and, then, calls to say she'll be a little late," he said, half speaking to Joe and I, and half muttering to himself.

Joe, whose curiosity is exceeded only by his dilatory manner, prodded the stranger on, "Troubles, fella?"

"Yeh, I've come 500 miles, all the way from Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, to see Jean, and waited in this stinking bar all afternoon. Now, she calls to say that her husband didn't go out of town as he had planned, and that, in order to get him out of the house," the stranger continued in a mockingly feminine manner, "she sent him after some rat poison, but that, possibly, for once, he'd come directly home."

"You mean, she ain't gonna' meet ya'," encouraged Joe, who by this time had put down his towel and beer mug, in an all-out effort to hear more.

"Sure, she'll meet me, if her husband plays true to form and doesn't come home tonight," he answered. "I'd give my eye-tooth for those days back in Bloomfield when Jean and I didn't have to worry about an unpredictable husband." "Of course," he continued, "I guess it pays to play it safe. I'd be the rat that got poisoned if that stupid husband of hers ever caught on."

I finished my one drink and dutifully got down from the bar stool and walked toward the paneled oak door. The big rope handle was easily located tonight, and the heavy door was opened without assistance.

I walked out onto the sidewalk, turned to the right, and began my jaunt home.

My wife and I lived just two short blocks from the busy downtown area. I stayed on my course, stopping neither at the City Club nor Hannegan's Bar, and I soon reached the old brownstone house where we had our three-room apartment.

I walked up the three cement steps, cracked and broken with age, all the while fumbling for my door key. I finally found the key hidden in the folds of my white handkerchief, and, finding it, easily opened the door with one quick turn of the key.

When I entered the long entrance hall that was one marked feature of all the brownstone houses along 52nd Street, my wife pleasantly called from the small adjoining room, "Did you get what I sent you for, darling?"

I answered, slowly and deliberately, "Yeh, Jean, I got the poison."

COUNTY SEAT ON SATURDAY

Shirley DeSimone

It may seem to some people that the county seat finds its excuse for being in the fact that there must be in each county a place for the laws to be administered, and for the merchants to band together and try to wrest from shrewd farmers a little of their dusty, toil-stained cash. This belief is doubtless sound as far as it goes, but to my mind the county seat serves an even higher purpose—that of providing a place to go on Saturday.

Saturday has a function unique among days, for it is the buffer between the busy, strenuous, clattering weekdays and still, silent, dreadfully holy Sunday. To plunge from one to the other might prove psychologically unnerving, so merry, naughty, daring, friendly, idle Saturday has inserted itself. It is a day for errands, like week days, but it is a day when the monotony of the week's work is to be abandoned, as it is on Sunday, Saturday, in short, is the day for variety, adventure, and fun, and all the good country folks know this from the littlest boy who hitch-hikes in to ride (in spirit) with the Durango Kid, to the oldest man, who manages (who knows how?) to wangle the choicest seat in the courthouse yard every week.

So it is, then, that on a summer Saturday morning, the boiling breakfast coffee bubbles more briskly in the big grey coffee pot, the red hair oil is more copiously applied, and little boys and girls are more sternly admonished to stay clean. The farmers are coming to town! Buying, selling; seeing, being seen; walking, standing; laughing, frowning; so it is with the crowd. By watching the people passing by, one can see a sort of composite country person, from life to death.

See this one coming here! A little girl, knee-high. Her dress is red, splattered with yellow and blue flowers whose size ill suits that of the diminutive wearer. Her hair, tow-white, hangs down in undetermined home-made curls, obviously a tribute to the importance of the day. This hair is decorated by a great red satin bow, which has slipped forlornly down over one ear. And, oh, anguish! The pavement, hot under the noon sun, is searing her little country feet, unused to the protective restrictions of shoes. She wails to her mother to pick her up, but gets no answer. Her mother, a stout woman with large hands and arms, tramps angrily on, pretending not to heed her crying daughter, who minces painfully in her wake, curling her little burnt toes. The mother in one hand holds an empty cream-bucket, and in the other a bag of groceries, from which peeps that exotic, unfamiliar vegetable, celery. Poor child! Her pain now is nothing to what it will be tonight, when her mother threatens to leave her home next Saturday.

Here come the pursuer and the pursued! The pursued are two young girls wearing brilliantly gaudy mail-order dresses. They totter dangerously and painfully on their first high heels. Their hair has been cast sternly in identical molds, for each has a new permanent wave. When they shake their heads, their hair does not seem to move. Their mouths are daubed heavily with bright scarlet, and the healthy brown of their freckled weekday skin has been deadened with cold cream and embalmed with powder. They are talking to one another with artificially rapt concentration, laughing too-loud vivacious laughs, and tossing arch remarks back over their heads without looking, for it would be the grossest breach of decorum to acknowledge in any way their awareness of the two slick-haired young strangers who are almost treading on their wavering heels.

The two youths lope hopefully with a plowing gait. There is something of the cowboy in their garb. One wears an oddly cut bright shirt with a trim suggestive of buckskin lacings. The other has rolled up his trousers a bit to show some highish-heeled boots. About them both floats an aura of rose-scented hair tonic. They say nothing to each other, each keeping his eyes fixed on his quarry, and his most ingratiating smile in readiness. Each knows his chance will come, as it does when the prey stops at the corner for a traffic light, casually adjusting its hosiery during the wait. After exchanging a few blundering *bons mots*, they pair off and repair to the darkness of the movie, where each boy, with arm draped artlessly around his lady's shoulder,

will accompany the popcorn's crackle with instructions and imprecations hissed at the screen.

While riders thunder by inside, the day wears on outside. The grocery shelves become depleted, the old man whittling on the courthouse steps surrounds himself with microscopic curls of wood. The girls in the dime store begin to wonder if nine o'clock will ever come, the flow of preaching in the courthouse yard dribbles to a stop. Old women with heavy shopping bags begin to say their interminable goodbyes.

The old man standing on the corner begins to look for a ride home. He was on his way to town before the dew was dry, amply supplied with chewing tobacco and friendliness. All day he has talked crops and politics to strangers, funerals and sicknesses to friends. In his hand he clutches a bag of ten-cent-store candy, which he is taking to his good, thin, old wife, who must now be cooking supper at home. His faded blue eyes scan the departing traffic confidently. Sure enough, a neighbor is driving by. In the sadly over-burdened Ford, the mother and father are almost obscured by a squirming mass of children. Wisely concealing the candy in the depths of his shiny black coat, he climbs in. Surrounded by the noisy youngsters, he begins to rehearse mentally the stories he'll tell at the supper table.

Saturday is almost over. The county seat returns to the possession of the shopkeepers. Back to the strong earth go the farmers and their wives, their love for it replenished by the contrast of a day in town. Beyond the booming shape of next week's work shines next week's Saturday.

SONNET

Laura V. Roberts

The day has dawned and I am still a slave
To memories which haunt me while I sleep;
But you have questioned why my face is grave
And why the sadness in my eyes runs deep.
I see you laugh a hundred times a day
And know you smile for others as for me;
I could not love you if you were not gay,
But question how sincere your smile must be.
But smile, and go on laughing for them all,
And I will find a gayer one than you,
Who has one smile which answers not **their** call,
And angers not my heart as **your** smiles do.
Perhaps it will be difficult to find
A lover who can love and yet be kind.

A COUNTRY KITCHEN

Howard M. Rowlette

Some geraniums sat in a window gay,
While pots and pans on the pantry wall
Toyed with a glint from the morning's ray,
Then settled to rest on a well worn shawl
Flung to a chair in a moment of haste.
A kettle on coals began to hum,
And answered right back by another one.
The whole kept in time by the clock's pendulum.
The smells all were wafted, stirred by a breeze—
Fresh baked bread, and souring cheese,
Fresh canned foods to appetites tease.

THE FIRST SUMMER RAIN

Mary Douglas Cornelison

I walked in the rain last night the first summer rain
 along wet pavements beneath shadowy, pungent trees
 beside houses, like white prisons against the damp wonder of the night.
 And I drew the night's anonymity close around me like a cloak,
 so that I might look on this night's beauty unobserved by the white
 prison dwellers.
 I saw the gaudy flash of neon lights dimmed by the night's compassionate
 mist
 and I remembered our winter walks in the rain
 a dream ago

The steady beat of the rain lulled my senses,
 and I felt somehow that you were there with me
 that once more we were cloaked in the night's easy silence
 broken only by our footsteps and the gentle monotony of the rain.
 I reached out for your hand's warmth
 a low laugh of deep pleasure rising slowly in my throat.
 My laughter was lost in the distant rumbling of the thunder.
 I felt the rain strike my face
 course down its length like large tears
 blurring my eyes by the mist on my lashes.

Then I knew you are gone gone beyond recall;
 only the night, the rain, and the hours that held our love are immut-
 able

But this first summer rain washed me free
 free of all tears, of all longing for you,
 just as those winter rains bound me to you
 a dream ago

MY GRANDFATHER

Doris Croley

Old folks down in Harlan County still remember my grandfather—Big Judge Caldwell. He was a person well-loved by everyone. Grandfather Caldwell, a huge, towering mass of man, always wore black—black string ties and big, black, broad-brimmed hats. He had white hair that curled down around his collar. As far as I know, he never raised his voice and I never saw him angry.

Grandfather was a principal of one of the county high schools and, odd as it may seem, the students thought him wonderful. They considered him as necessary to school life as a rudder to a boat. Always when John played hookey, or Bill hit Tom, or even the time when Alex was caught smoking in the gymnasium, the judge would always understand. First he would talk it over with the boys. His warm color glowing through his tan, his clear, steady eyes, and erect, vigorous form, all testified to his keen zest in the adventure of life. Most people would have seen many of the school kids as hopeless "toughs." But to my grandfather they were just active boys, eager for life, who had been made what they were by unwholesome surroundings. He discovered, while on a field trip one day, their happy participation in outdoor life. Thus began one of the best Boy Scout organizations in that section of the state. He seemed to realize how necessary it is to have a strong guiding power in one's life.

Life was always an adventure to Grandfather Caldwell. By him, the worst of things could be made fun to the school kids. Not only was he involved with his high school, but the children in the orphanage over in the next state had high regard for him. It was always the judge and his community who remembered them with fruit and baskets of food on Christmas Day, on Easter Sunday, on Valentine's Day, and on numerous other days.

But there was another side to my grandfather. While he loved people and found keen enjoyment in living with people and helping others whenever he could, he, too, was possessed with the companionship of solitude. A great reader of Thoreau, Grandfather loved the walks through the woods as did the famed author. Many times, leaving the world behind him, he would escape to the beautiful mountains surrounding his home. He loved the mountain air, the flaming redness of the maples in October, the corn shocks, the pumpkins, the black walnut trees, and the lift of the hills. He found all of these in his walks in southeastern Kentucky.

But one warm, sunshiny day, my grandfather left us for his "castle in the air," and I knew that his "work need not be lost." The huge cathedral might well have been a tiny chapel for all it could do to hold those of us who wanted to say goodbye to him. While I stood in the cool, candle-lit dusk of the church waiting for the procession to make its way up the sunny avenue, I looked about me at all the lips moving in silent prayer and the many people wiping their eyes free of tears and unmindful of shame. I thought of all those whom he had reassured that there might be, after all, a good deal to this institution called the human race.

No wonder all the sidewalk space as far as one could see was needed for the overflow at his funeral. To me, the mute multitude in the June sunlight was the more impressive congregation.

As I returned home that evening, a mood of melancholy wistfulness fell over me. Instead of mourning for Grandfather Caldwell, I only thought of his favorite passage from his favorite author. "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." That passage should have been the epitaph of my grandfather, Judge Caldwell.

"I" FOR IDIOT

Robert C. Points

"I am the biggest fool that ever lived," my friend, Bill Miller, muttered. I shook my head.

"I am! I am!"

"No, you're not."

"What! After what I told you! I am the biggest fool that ever lived!"

"Have you ever read 'Human Idiots' by Michael Van Putman?" I asked. Bill shook his head.

"Well," I said, "about three years ago I came across it. Bought it for a dime in a second-hand bookshop. Never had I read anything that pleased me as much. Never had I hoped to find an author who would express my ideas so thoroughly—and so well. And after all, that's what we are really looking for in an author—our ideas, isn't it so?"

Bill continued to grumble—"biggest fool—"

"'Human Idiots!'—the very title gave me a sharp delight. I feared, at first, that it might be another 'triangle' story, or perhaps some social diatribe. It was neither. It was just what I had desired. The author proved conclusively, mathematically, that we are all idiots, that our ancestors were all idiots, that our descendants, forever and forever, will be idiots."

"Biggest fool—biggest fool—"

"Of course, any man who has reached maturity and is honest enough would say the same. But simply to shout, 'idiots—idiots,' means nothing. You need an artist to prove it—prove it in a way that permits of no contradiction. Well, 'Human Idiots' pierced every bubble which we are pleased to call human intelligence, and proved that nothing existed, exists, or will exist, except idiocy—collective idiocy. Not insanity, mind you. That is something else. Insanity means simply deviation from an established norm. Idiocy—defectives—idiocy represented by an open mouth, saliva running down the chin—"

"Biggest fool—biggest fool—" Bill continued his lamentation.

"I decided to meet the author," I pursued my story. "Imagine me—the most timid of people—daring to entertain such a notion! But I was impelled by an irresistible urge to see the man, to press his hands in gratitude, to bow in reverence before his genius.

"For days I walked in front of his door. If I only dared! At last, when I was certain I should never do it, I found myself pressing the small, white button, deeply, deeply, to the very end of its cavity."

"Biggest fool—biggest fool—"

"May I see the author of 'Human Idiots!'?" I asked a tall gentleman, handsome with a small beard and meticulously groomed like a college professor or bank president."

"I am the author of 'Human Idiots!' "

"I was taken aback. I expected him different—a small man, humped, a man with frightened or angry eyes. But no matter. I was audacious. When a timid man becomes audacious, nothing can stop him, you know. I am inclined to believe that men like Caesar and Napoleon had been timid, more timid than the majority of mankind, and that is why they had to become more daring than the rest. Anyhow, I grasped the author's hand, and said: 'Sir, your book is the great masterpiece I have longed all my lifetime to read. I was bored by the classics. I was irritated by the moderns. I longed to read the great truth—'

"I continued in this vein for some time. The author seemed delighted. He invited me to enter. He led me into his library. It was spotlessly neat. Every book in its place. On the table a flower-vase with fresh flowers, book-ends which hugged a few volumes, leather-bound, an ancient inkstand. I should have wished books strewn all about, sheets of paper, like leaves under foot. In short, disorder and folly—a replica of the man's mind. But I would not let this dampen my enthusiasm. I went on talking about 'Human Idiots!'—my admiration for its style, for its truth, for its uniqueness. The author was increasingly delighted. He offered me a cigarette, asked me what I wished to drink. I told him I was not a drinker, but if he had something mild, like sherry, I would appreciate it. He brought a bottle out of the adjoining room and poured glasses. I stood up, raised my glass, and toasted: 'To "Human Idiots!"'

"The wine lent fresh vigor to my tongue—you know how I am—a few sips and I become eloquent. Now and then, the author managed to wedge in a remark. He was distressed by the fact that few people read him; by the publishers who lost money on his books; by the rejection slips from magazines.

" 'What does it matter, sir, if idiots don't understand or appreciate you? It's a sign that your book tells the truth—we all are idiots!' I laughed. He laughed also, and refilled the glasses. I stood up again, and toasted: 'To the author of "Human Idiots!" To the greatest idiot!'

"He looked at me sharply. 'What do you mean. In what sense—the greatest idiot?'

" 'In a literal sense. In a literal sense.' He glared at me, but I went on blithely. 'The greatest idiot, of course. For, who but an idiot would bother writing for idiots?' I drank the glass at one draught, as wine should never be drunk, but it gave me courage and, I thought, brilliance. 'Certainly, sir, in a very literal sense. The greatest idiot of them all!' I said exultantly. 'You know, I was disappointed when you met me at the door. You look like a college or bank president. I expected to see a sort of a hunchback with an open mouth, saliva running down his chin.' I was about to repeat the phrase 'in a literal sense,' when I felt my face all wet, splashed by the wine which the author hurled at me.

" 'Impertinent fool!' he shouted, waving his fists. 'How dare you call me an idiot!'

" 'Aren't we all—from the beginning of time to the end? As you say in the Preface—' I muttered, wiping my face. 'In a literal sense—'

" 'How dare you! I am the greatest mind of the age—author of 100 books, published and unpublished!'

"I became again the timid man I naturally am. I actually felt my timid-

ity overcome me like some living thing. I became small, small, while the author towered over me like a mountain.

"Get out of my house! Get out!" he shouted.

"But before I managed to extricate myself out of the chair and reach the door, I heard gutter words that seemed absurd and ridiculous emerging from the mouth of a gentleman with a small white beard, immaculately dressed like a bank or college president."

"I am the biggest fool that ever lived," Bill once again punctured my story.

Impatiently, I said: "You are! You are!"

He dropped the hands which had held his mourning head, and glared at me. "I said you are the biggest fool that ever lived!"

"Why am I?" he shouted. "Why?"

"Because you had no business to let that gold digger make fun of you as you did."

"And how should I know she was after my money?"

"Everybody knew it, and everybody told it to you, but you wouldn't listen because you are the biggest fool that ever lived!"

"You've got a nerve calling me that," he yelled, jumping from his seat. "And that author was right kicking you out of the house."

I had been under the impression that he had heard nothing of what I related, but little seemed to have escaped him, as he went on lambasting me. "Going around insulting people—calling them names! Why, I—I—" he raised the chair.

Fortunately I was on the other side of the door when the chair struck.

"I am the greatest idiot and the biggest fool that ever lived," I said aloud when I reached the street, and looked around belligerently to see if anyone dared to agree with me.

IN TENSE

Lois Henson

The past is in the hands of Satan;
It is dead, beyond recall.
The present, in the hands of man;
He can work, or dream, or brawl.
But the future God is holding;
It's the noblest gift of all.

MY MOTHER

Laura V. Roberts

He sat listening to a speech. The auditorium was filled to capacity, and the stage was decorated with freshly-cut spring flowers. Just behind the speaker sat four other people, and behind them the college choir, seemingly serene in white robes. The speaker, a woman, was an attractive, pleasing person, a woman whose age no one knew, because no one thought of age in connection with her. She was saying, "I know your mothers by the things I see in your faces . . ."

"I wonder," he thought, "if she could know my mother by my face . . ."

The lady sitting beside him was crying a little, and across the aisle, a little in front of him, he saw a girl place her hand over that of the older woman on her right.

"Home," the speaker said musingly, her voice penetrating his consciousness again, "somehow, we always turn back home, and know that there, as constant as the stars, someone is waiting to comfort us."

"Home . . . I wonder," he mused again, "if homes are like that," and his barely visible smile betrayed bitterness.

"I'd like to ask you down," his imagination said to the speaker. "Come on down to the proud city from which I came. I'll take you down to Bay Street." He saw them in his mental picture—he and the lovely, assured speaker, walking down Bay Street. Suddenly she faded from the scene and he saw himself stop for a moment and look up at the building, the dark, dingy, seemingly lifeless building in which he had lived until he was sixteen.

He shook himself away from the thoughts, and a wave of relief spread over him as he realized that he was not on Bay Street, but secure and happy here at the college. Yes, safe, respectable, respected.

He could not, however, stop his mind from reviewing the circumstances which had at last brought him here. He remembered his first four years of college—working in the library, and the drug-store downtown; he remembered typing for other students and working as assistant to Dr. Ellis. Now, after the struggle he was here teaching in this college from which he had graduated with highest honors only four years before. The four year interval had included his graduate work and his two-year army career. He had attained one of his goals. No, he was not finished; but at least many of his dreams were realized. Here was the work he loved; here the wholesome, intellectual, kind people with whom he was so perfectly at ease. Somehow he knew that soon this would be the only life which would seem real to him.

"No think of mother today," the lovely voice said, "for this is essentially her day . . . and then you may be proud to say to yourself, 'My mother'."

Mentally he turned again to Bay Street. Once there, he found himself still standing before the old apartment building, looking up at the window he knew so well. Morning the dark stairs, he heard a scratching-scramble as a rat hurried along the hall. The apartment was as filthy as ever, and a greasy smell persisted. A woman lay across the unmade bed, a woman, wrinkled and ravaged, whose hair was an unnatural color of ashburn . . .

Turning, he literally fled down the shadowy stairs, the odor nearly stifling him, and left the building which was suited by type and location to the business of the woman upstairs.

In the well-lighted auditorium, beautifully decorated and filled with smiling people, no one heard him say, "My mother."

"WILLING AND ABLE"

Mrs. Bess M. Hays

There was an air of worried expectancy over the little mining town. Even the familiar grinding of the noisy shakers and the rumbling of the coal cars became ominous sounds. The coal dust sifting its way through the morning light was symbolic of the dark forebodings that filled the hearts and minds of the busy workmen filing toward the mouth of the pit. The motor-man with his lighted lamp like a beacon in the murky air hunched in the box of the motor. Strung out behind him were the squat square mining cars. Empty now of their usual ston cargo, they awaited the arrival of the workers. The twinkling lamps on the miners' caps and the gleaming dinner pails made strange contrast with their coal-blackened overalls.

The hard-soled shoes clumped against the sides of the cars as wordlessly they climbed into the waiting man-trip. There was no need for words. Everyone knew this was the last day's operation for Number Seven. This part of the diggings was being abandoned by the mining company.

As the last man pushed into his place, sitting flat on the bottom of the car with alternate rows of feet and heads, the motor-man put the pale on the trolley wire, and with a smile and flash the trip started. Into the blackness of the mountain they went. Far ahead there was a feeble glow of signal lights. Thus with the gleam of the headlights on the steel tracks was the only break in theinky region. The motor-man turned the big iron brake-wheel, removed his trolley pale from the wire overhead, and came grinding to a stop. The men climbed over the sides of the cars and hurried to their various work

stations. They walked bent over to avoid the low trolley wire hanging only five or six feet above the tracks. They raised clouds of dust as they kicked aside the piles of broken coal beside the tracks.

In groups of twos and threes, the miners turned aside to their rooms and headings. The main track branched at every room, and empty cars were pushed up to the end of the tracks waiting the shovels of the loaders. At regular intervals along the track, stout props or timbers held back the black roof. In some places there were heavy beams across the tops of the timbers. Probably the miners never thought of it, but there was something of Hercules holding up the world in these great props.

Two men took off their denim jackets, hung them with their dinner pails on a nearby timber. One was a tall, thin man with the drawl of the Kentucky mountaineer.

"What you gonna do, Big Joe, now that she's a shuttin' down?"

Big Joe didn't answer but picked up his shovel and began throwing coal into the empty car. He was Italian, short, fat, with a narrow brown moustache that curled down into two question marks. He seldom made use of his privileges at the bath house, and around each eye there was always a heavy line of coal dust. He looked as if he had emerged from a fistic encounter with two black eyes. His worn, black workclothes were stiff with sweat and coal dirt. The overalls had been cut off to accommodate his short, sturdy legs, and were stuffed into the tops of the heavy, steel-toed shoes. Joe was the only miner on the section who could walk down the low entries without ducking his head to avoid trolley wires and timber headers.

Big Joe's buddy had not really expected him to answer his question. Of necessity Joe talked very little. His buddy did not understand Italian, and Joe's English was limited. He was learning English, however, the English of the coal mine. When he first began his work, he was frightened at the strangeness of the mine. When the big gathering motor roared up to the room for the cars of coal Joe had loaded, he would drop his shovel and dive back into the black face of the seam. Then, sheepishly, he would exclaim, "She so beeg." In some respects he proved a very apt pupil in English. Soon he had learned to emphasize the "so beeg" in a way that would have done credit to the toughest native loader.

The coal mine was a marvel to Joe. He never tired of watching the endless operations. Only a few nights before he had been given an extra shift with the night crew. He was speechless as he watched the machine operators go about their work. The electrically operated machines cut out huge blocks of coal by means of an endless chain attached to a disc on a motor. The bits or teeth sawed their way into the black coal. Joe stood petrified with amazement as the drillers and shooters followed with their work. The electric drill bored deep holes into the coal for the powder or dynamite. The workers almost dragged Joe away by force when they fired the shots that crumbled the blocks of coal and made them ready for the next day's loading.

Joe and his buddy worked without stopping until their cars were filled and pulled away. While they waited for more empties, they took down their dinner pails and ate their lunch. The hulking figure of the chief foreman loomed in the opening of their room without warning. "Hey, you Joe, here's a paper for you." The tone held dislike and the face showed distaste as the fat little Italian came forward to get the paper.

"What she say, Boss?" asked Joe in a worried whisper.

"Read it and see," the answer was terse and rough.

"Lemme see, Joe," his buddy offered when the foreman had gone. "I ain't sich a good reader, but I figure I'll know what it says." For a few minutes he studied the paper and then silently handed it back to the waiting Joe.

"Maybe I go with rest of men to new mines." Joe was hopeful.

"No, you don't, Joe, but you got a good right to go. All the rest are gonna' git transferred. You load better coal than half the men in these diggings. The boss's got it in for you because he don't like furriners. If I was

you, I'd see the union committee. It's agin the contract to fire a man without cause."

Joe's buddy returned to his work, muttering indignantly to himself. He realized Joe was the victim of an unreasonable dislike for foreigners on the part of the foreman. He was disturbed and somehow outraged, but he could not find words or expression for his feelings.

When the men gathered at the entry to wait for the man-trip at the end of the day's work, it was found that every man in the section had been given a transfer to the new mine except Joe. Again the words on the blue paper were read to Joe. "Discharged. Reason: Work unsatisfactory."

"What she say, that unsatisfactory?" Joe was puzzled by the long, unfamiliar word.

"It means your work don't suit 'em, Joe," explained a fellow worker. "How many cars do you load?"

"He led the sheet, last half," Joe's buddy answered for him. "There ain't a better loader on the section."

The man-trip halted outside the mine entrance and the tired miners tumbled out, crowding toward the bath-house, eager to get home to hot suppers and rest. Joe climbed over the side of his car, a picture of dejection and woe. "Unsatisfactory." The very sound of the word terrorized him. He was sick at heart. Remembering the advice of some of the men to see the union committee, he looked about and presently recognized one of the officers of the union.

"Hey, mister, please. I need see you."

The man stopped and looked at Joe, who handed him the blue paper.

"Well, Joe, I think I know the reason for this, and it has nothing to do with your work. There is a meeting of the union committee and management tonight in the big office. You be there about seven and we'll see what we can do." Noticing Joe's dejection, he added, "Don't worry, Joe. We'll fix everything O. K."

Long before the appointed hour, Joe was standing outside the office. He shrank back against the wall when he saw the foreman, but he distinctly heard his profane reference to a "wop." When the union committee arrived, Joe was taken in and given a seat in a corner some distance from the conference table.

For an hour discussions of grievances and contract violations waxed hot. Sometimes it was a committee member who pounded the table and grew loud in his demands. Again, it was the foreman who became abusive. In his corner, a strange thing happened to Joe. In the haze of the tobacco smoke about the table, the men seemed to change. In their places, Joe thought he could see black-shirted, black-booted, hard-faced men. The American talk seemed to ring Italian in his ears. Maybe it was the beating of his own heart. Maybe it was worry that clouded his eyesight. Surely there could be no connection between a terrifying scene of long ago in Fascist Italy and one in free America. While Joe pondered this, a man came quietly into the room. He greeted the men cordially, and took a seat at the table. The talk ceased. The men seemed to be waiting respectfully for the newcomer to open the discussion.

"Gentlemen, I'll look over the grievances." The man's tone held authority, but it did not sound like the foreman's. For some reason Big Joe breathed easier. The vision of the black shirts and Italy disappeared entirely. Fascinated, he listened. Sometimes the committee argued but the man always listened carefully to their arguments. Sometimes he took a magic book called "the contract" and read parts of it aloud. Then Joe heard his own name and saw a committee member present the blue paper. The man read it and began to question the foreman.

The foreman and one of the committee had an angry exchange of words. In the heat of the argument, the foreman used the word "wop" repeatedly. Finally the tonnage records of previous months' work were spread on the table. Everyone looked intently at the sheets of paper. The committee member said, "Joe's record speaks for itself. He has led the sheet for three months."

"He can't understand plain English. It's not safe to work a man that dumb," the foreman contended.

"Where are your safety records?" the man asked.

The safety records were brought and spread on the table. The men about the table scrutinized them with care. The results of the daily inspections for safe timbering, clean clearances, rock dusting, were all recorded. Joe's record was clear. There was not a mark against him.

The men about the table waited for the man to speak. "Gentlemen, it is always my policy to treat the men who work in my mines with utmost fairness. Satisfactory work is based on reasonable production and observation of safety procedures. Unless you can show an employee has failed in one or both of these, I feel there is no ground for dismissal."

The meeting came to an end.

"Come to the office in the morning for a transfer slip, Joe."

The foreman was gruff but Joe didn't mind. He felt wonderful. He didn't know it but he had just witnessed one of the miracles of democracy.

HOW DOES ONE WRITE?

Patricia Lackey

How does one write an essay? How does one write anything? The mind is supposed to hold a wealth of information, ideas, thoughts to be expressed, and, yet, how can anyone else share these things unless they are set down in words? There must be something there, some spark, often called imagination, but I think it must be something more potent than imagination. Some are gifted with the power to express exactly what they want to. Others have thoughts crammed inside them, but the words and pictures must be forever locked inside their minds, because there is no ability to help these words flow from the pen.

To me, there is no helplessness such as this. One may be blind, unable to walk or hear, but if he is able to express the beauty locked within him, then he cannot be called completely helpless. There are so many things in life to be written about—yet there are so few words to write with. Can one describe a spring day in the woods, the quiet beauty of surrounding nature, in the same words one would use to express the vivacious excitement of an athletic contest? There is where the gift of expression is needed. Words must be changed, varied to give mood, suggestiveness, and to create the proper atmosphere for the subject written about.

Think what the world is missing. There must be millions of people with thoughts swirling around inside them—thoughts that should be shared with others, but there is no way of letting these thoughts loose—no way of letting someone else enlarge on these ideas. Many of these thoughts may be only momentary flashes of beauty to the originator, but to another they may be the one thing to raise him from gloom, to give an added zest to life. Who knows—perhaps past wars could have been prevented if people could only have expressed the hidden and secret spots of beauty within them. Words are wonderful things—if only everyone could use them to such purpose as the gifted few do.

PORTRAIT IN WATER

Robert C. Points

It's raining . . .

chilling-warm rain, caressing my face with boneless fingers . . .

strong, slanting rain . . . like puppet strings guided by an

omnipotent robot . . .

or

like bars of a cage.

Down it comes,

In endless drops—

A deathly hum,
That never stops.

It cleanses . . . no . . . conceals . . .
the average, simple, charlatanic, parvenu, Philistine figure . . .
incessantly trudging along . . . a prayer on his lips and a flag
in his eyes . . .
a broken figure . . . broken by adulterous hope of a mystic, wishful
dream . . .

by ceaseless battle between supercilious Good and Evil . . .
regretting the past; dreading the future—broken upon those
wheels that move in opposite directions . . . sterile, cyclic,
animalistic emotionalism . . .
by a hypnotic state of insidious suggestibility, intolerance,
indiscrimination, unreceptiveness, and wishfulness promulgated
by exploiters and substituted for objective experiences . . .
considering hopes and wishes actualities . . . thinking what-is
and what-should-be are tantamount . . . believing . . . reputation
and ability, legality and morality, theory and practice, use-
fulness and truth are identical . . . fanatical faith . . .

blind.

Still it comes,
In lesser drops—
A deathly hum,
That nearly stops.

Gentle, soothing rain now . . . “each drop reflects the universe” . . .
reflects sin (what is it?) . . . need we ask Aristotle or Plato,
Christ or Mohammed? Ah, no . . . “Sin is sweet beyond forgiving;
brief beyond regret.” Sin . . . the answer to superstitious, un-
compromising moralisms.

“Say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we need but kiss it,
And it's no longer sin.”

Reflects love . . . “All that find him lose him” (but all have
found him fair) . . . Love . . . the point beyond which we stand
alone . . . yet fools attempt to divide the qualitative as if it
were quantitatively divisible . . . Love . . . the oneness of
happiness . . . only now . . . no abstractions of time—moments . . .
past, present, future . . . happiness in the immediate present . . .
possible only in the nows.

Delight lasts but an hour,
Yet therein lies its power.

Reflects hate . . . a warm, bellicose emotion . . . taps one's energy;
gives it direction . . . more efficient than love, more clever . . .
induces men to pristine killing in the name of religion, of a
flag, of gold, of “love”, etc. . . . very efficient—if they know
not why they kill.

Say of hate—I have it,
Of love—I want it,
Of both—I need them,
Of neither (fear)—I'm religious.

Reflects man . . . man, the individual . . . individuality—the ex-
pression of his egoism . . . as individual as these drops of water—
drawn from the sea, sifted into a puddle, drifted into a stream,
into a river, obstructed and enhanced—finally reaching the
boundless seas again . . . as “individual” as that drop in the sea.

No longer it comes,
The earth is slop,
The deathly hum,
Will come to stop . . . as,

And with his destructive toys,
man may reach his rumored greatness . . . in the last world.

Restatement in retrospect:

"One world or no world,"

Some proclaim, with voices astute.

Is that the only absolute?

Yet,

We still see flags unfurled;

And,

We still see ethereal choirs

Defending the golden hoard;

And,

We still see human desires

Guarded by the Flaming Sword;

And

Coup d'état or coup de plume?

Humanity breathlessly awaits!

THE SNOW-GIFT

Robert Frank Cayton

The snow fluffed about him as he walked down the deserted street. Since this town was strange to him, he didn't know where he was.

He had debated for miles while riding in the open box car of a slow-moving freight whether to leave a somewhat comfortable resting place to search for food in an unfamiliar town, but his stomach had not debated. It told him he must get off and somehow, some way find food. The contents of a bottle of milk, stolen from a back porch in Cincinnati, was the only thing he had taken into his stomach for over a week. But his stomach had refused to hold the substance.

The freight had lumbered onto a siding near the town station. He had slipped from the car and made his way from the tracks to what he thought might be the main street of the town.

Perhaps he might beg some money. When hunger growled, he readily bowed to its demands. However, since it was late at night and the wind whipped cold through the straight, broad streets of the mid-western town, there was no one to be found on any of the streets.

He stopped in front of an "open-all-night" hamburger stand and the smell of frying meat and onions and boiling coffee sickened him. He stumbled into the wooden stand and humbly shuffled up to the counter. At the far end of the counter, a man and woman sat drinking coffee. A man, wearing a worn leather jacket, sat several stools away from them. Busy attacking a plate of French fries and a big steak, he ate noisily. Between bites, he sipped black liquid from the mug that steamed beside his plate.

The young man behind the counter was washing dishes. When he saw him, he came to the counter opposite him, wiped his hands on a huge white apron that was showing signs of use, and asked in a voice that betrayed his age, "What for you?"

Wetting his chapped lips with a swollen tongue, he looked cautiously about him. He wanted to ask for food, for anything that the boy might give him. He nervously twisted his hands and then when he became conscious that the four people were staring fearfully at him, he turned and hurried as fast as his weakened legs would carry him from the warmth of fire and food.

As he stumbled down the street, he saw something gleaming in the snow. He dropped to his knees and fumbled it into his hands with chilled fingers. His heart complained sharply and he stopped a moment in his examination of the object to grab at his chest. The pain subsided and when it did, he realized that the object he held was only a ball of tin-foil made from chewing gum wrappers. Some child had probably worked up the mess and thrown it onto the walk as he skipped along to a warm home.

"It's not money! It's not money," he cried hoarsely. Then he looked up and said, "I once found money on a street in Columbus. It was a fifty-cent

piece." Although no one could hear him, he jabbered on as if he were talking to a friend. "It isn't entirely impossible that I might find money here on this street. Just enough to buy me some coffee. That's all I really need. Just something to tide me over. I'll find a job here tomorrow. Then everything will be all right again. It will be like when I worked in the bank." He stood up and rolled the ball of tin-foil about in his palm. "The bank. Oh, why did I ever run away?" He shouted to the wind and the snow and the empty street and tears of emotion streaked the grime that covered his youngish face. The tears were jewels of his grey eyes that reflected misery, fear, and above all the stinging jabs of hunger.

"Why? Why?" he muttered as he dragged on down the street. He stepped from the curb and the slush in the gutter oozed through his tattered shoes. He chilled when the slush touched the bare skin of his sockless foot.

His eyes, frantically searching the gutter, almost failed to see it. It was lying pinned beneath a lump of fresh snow, as if it had been left for someone. Perhaps it had been dropped from some pocket by a careless taxi fare. He stared at it and then he fell into the slush and grabbed at it.

He couldn't believe it. Had he been right he would find another piece of money? He staggered up against the lamp post and examined it more closely under the yellow light. It was a dirty green, yet he could make out that it was money. He brushed more snow away and his heart pained briefly when he saw it was a five dollar bill.

"It isn't true. But it must be. It must be. I've found money before," he croaked to the street lamp.

He started to put the money into the pocket of his ragged coat and then with horror he thought he might lose it. He clutched it in his right hand and started across the street.

He didn't hear the motor of the car, he didn't see the headlights, or hear the screech of brakes as the vehicle slid on the iced cement, for he crumpled to the street in a convulsion of pain seconds before the wheels of the car mashed across his body.

THE ODDEST THING

Patricia Lackey

Tom walked out of the doctor's office. There was a dazed, unbelieving look on his face. Stumbling down the stone steps, he faced the beautiful spring day with unseeing eyes. People he had known all his life turned and looked at him with amazement as he passed them by with no sign of recognition.

Hesitatingly, he started toward home. His mind was seething with only one thought—two weeks, two weeks to live—after that nothing.

It was hard to believe, yet there it was. He would not have believed it had not the X-rays proved it. He had asked for it straight as soon as he had seen Dr. Martin's grave and disturbed face, and he had gotten it straight—he would be dead in two weeks.

Such a short time was two weeks! Tom had no idea what to do to prepare for death beyond the usual things such as seeing that his insurance was in proper order and various last-minute things he must do at the office. Otherwise he was bewildered. He couldn't just go along as usual, because now everything was different. He saw the town he lived in and the people he knew with different eyes. The world was not the same any more. He must cram everything he could into fourteen or maybe less days.

A new thought struck him with horror. How could he tell his wife? At first he thought he wouldn't tell Helen at all, but let things come naturally. Then it occurred to him that it wouldn't be fair to her. She would want to know and help him if she could.

Tom turned in the flagstone path that led to his home, the small white bungalow that he would be leaving forever in a little time. Thank God, there was no mortgage. Helen would have that much, anyway. He opened the door

and entered the hall. Funny how one became aware of the least little thing now. For instance, that lamp on the hall table had a crack in the base.

Helen was bustling around in the kitchen making the usual noises a woman makes when she is in charge of a kitchen. Tom hated to think of leaving her. She was such a little thing, but she was more capable than most people thought.

"Tom? Is that you?" she called.

"Yeah, I'm home."

He strolled out to the kitchen and leaned in the doorway watching Helen prepare dinner. She glanced at him, turned, and looked again.

With a sudden flash of intuition she asked, "Is anything wrong?"

"No, I'm just tired." He was amazed that he could sound so calm.

All through dinner Helen watched him, trying to find what was bothering him.

After dinner as they sat by the fire, Helen again asked him, "Tom, something's bothering you. What is it? Can't you tell me?"

Tom knew he would have to tell Helen the truth, and there was no time to delay for an easier way of telling her—if there is an easy way to tell someone who loves you that you are going to die.

He broke the news as gently as he could, starting from the beginning of the pain through his shoulder and the fainting spells to the doctor's fatal words. Helen sat there, stunned, fear in her eyes as she stared at Tom. Tears welled up, then disappeared. After a long while she lifted her chin with a gesture of defiance and whispered,

"We'll make this the best two weeks in our lives."

The next day Tom cleaned out his desk at the office, did all necessary things toward helping someone else to take his place. He told the fellows that he was leaving in a couple of weeks for a different position in the city. They all expressed the usual sentiments about hating to see him go, and Tom wondered what they would say if they knew the truth.

During the next days Tom grew steadily weaker and he spent every moment he could with Helen. He never wanted her out of his sight, and she did the best she could toward getting him anything, granting his least wish. Now the once annoying habit Helen had of misplacing things only endeared her to him. He began to notice things about her that he had never paid much attention to before, and he realized that he had been taking her for granted for years. Tom thought back and remembered the little things like the time she quit her beloved bridge club just so she could spend more time with him.

As time wore on and the days turned into a week and then two, Tom noticed that Helen took a calm, almost happy, attitude about the matter. When he questioned her about it she could find no explanation. One day he told her how glad he was that she was not the kind of wife that went around crying all the time and wondering what she would do after he was gone.

Helen replied, a troubled look in her eyes, "I can't understand it. It's not that I have put it out of my mind. I fully realize what is going to happen, and yet, I can't seem to see myself after you are gone. I don't feel sad, and still I know that life will be completely empty without you."

Tom could not move out of bed now, and it was obvious that he was in constant pain. The doctor came every day to administer a sedative. Then Wednesday afternoon of the third week he died as Helen was lifting him up to a more comfortable position. Gently Helen lowered him to the bed, and with a strange smile she went to the telephone and called the doctor.

When Dr. Martin arrived he found Tom and Helen—Tom in bed as she had left him, but Helen was still sitting by the phone, her head on her arms, and she was smiling happily now.

For years afterward Dr. Martin often talked about it.

"It was the oddest thing," he would say, "her heart simply stopped beating. It is as if she were just waiting for Tom to die so she could go with him. They were always close, and yet she seemed to know—I guess it's just one of those things that no one can explain."

A GUINEA HEN

Shirley DeSimone

She is so old she is brittle and if too much strain were put on her, she would crack, I think, with the tinkle of falling icicles on breaking glass.

My father says she is a guinea hen in human form, and it is true that she always looks and sometimes sounds like one. Age has pulled her nose down into a beak, and thinned her hair so much that her head juts small and bony from her bent shoulders, just as that bird's does. Her feathers are the black-and-white cotton prints that old women always seem to find somewhere. She laughs a little scraping laugh like a guinea's call.

She has a wealth of stories to tell, stories of days just beyond the memory of my parents' generation. She could tell of golden afternoons when the loom hummed and cloth was born. She might speak of the monstrous labors women used to do: the giant sweaty misery of picking blackberries at mid-day, the endless vibration of clothes against washboard, and the numb, chilly urgency of curing fresh-killed pork in the fall.

She remembers, too, a night when she helped to dance a house right off its stone foundation, and how the screeching, savage fiddle kept on wailing, and the heavy feet continued to thump, even after the cabin slid crazily into the dust.

And she could tell, but will not, of a wild red-bearded man who one time rode a raft of mighty logs down a river ripe with springtime flood. She could mention that this half-barbarian came down alone, and took her back, his swiftly captured bride.

She knows these things, but does not speak of them, for her grown-up sons and daughters are ashamed to hear her old-time anecdotes. They are too close to see the magic of it all, so she obediently sits silent, laughing her guinea laugh at appropriate moments. Only some dark, bent tin-types can prove that there was a day when she put roses in her hair, and laughed not like a guinea, but a lark.

A LITTLE WHILE

Laura V. Roberts

If you will remember me

A little while—

Say, beyond the dawn of eternity—

Perhaps I shall have had days enough

To make you proud.

BEDELIA

Howard Rowlette

For fifteen years I lived in the mauve mists of the Mississippi, and side by side the river and I watched the years flow by us, watched the willows bud and die, watched insipid summer driven down beyond New Orleans by the steel wool clouds of winter, watched and wailed the passing of Bedelia.

Bedelia was our mammy. Yes, **our** mammy, the river's and mine. Her moods rose to turbulence as did the river, and sank to solemnity as I did. She talked and scolded the river much the same as she did me, and I can see her even now, her hulking body and heaving bosom, reflected in the flowing fudge waters, venting vigorous by her wrath at the mischievous stream and child.

I don't know how the river remembers Bedelia, but my most pleasant memories of her are usually tinged with something aromatic. She intrudes herself into every long cherished thought of my childhood, and seems the spirit and personification of exquisitely cooked food. She wasn't merely a cook, she had many talents and vices. But her food! It must come first; it is merely what to praise audibly, and what to save for silent worship.

I can recall with pleasure the savory applesauce she used to feed me. It was deliciously complex; it had three distinct elements: a thinly sweet yellow syrup, a silky mush, and large pieces of tender apple, faintly, oh so

faintly! tart. She served it still warm and powdered dully on top with a fragrant mixture of sugar and cinnamon. She served me at the table, in the garden of lilting lilacs, or would carry a bowlful to me down a steep bank to my most perilous seat in a crotch of a sad, drooping willow, which hung aggressively over a narrow, noisy creek, whose waters were not like the river, but always blue cold and in a tumbling hurry.

Impervious to time, that applesauce still bows and smiles among my most gracious memories.

But what of Bedelia herself? She was as munificent as the multiplication table. She was both tall and graceful yet hilariously heavy. And could she sing! Her singing was a vital and major part of her. Her repertoire was varied—she sang “Golden Slippers,” “Nellie Gray,” “Kathleen Mavourreen,” “Alouette,” and a number of Tschaikovsky’s songs. She knew French carols and lullabies and a great many of Handel’s sacred songs. I don’t know where she learned them all, but I’ve a hunch that hundreds of them came from the “show-boat,” and my mother may have taught her the classics, while the French themes she picked up from my father’s folks. “Eli Eli” was my favorite, and when she sang it, her voice was the most mournful and passionate patterned sound I can remember. She could turn me from red anger to the most extravagant and soul-felt tears by three bars of it.

Scornful and merry, she was perplexing and proud. By birth and lineage she was pure pagan. Her hymns, when she sang them, became votive chants sung with offerings of spiritual grapes and blood. The god she worshiped so faithfully was surely no Christian one; the mark of Pan’s hoof was too evident upon her. She was deeply religious and even more deeply superstitious.

She filled me with the forebodings of her belief and credos. Even now her ghosts and pixies dance macabrely before my open eyes.

She took many things into her hands. She was my nurse, my mentor, and my judge. She allowed me to be punished by no one, except, of course, grand-pere, who had a stronger will and more withering tongue than she, and herself. Her manner was novel,—first she prophesied, then she chastised. She would put her hand on her bulbous bulges that substituted for hips, throw her head back and begin:

“You young sinna,” she would rant, “I see yo’ beatin’ ’gainst gatez ob hell, and I see Satan lashin’ you wif a cat-ob-nine-tails made ob yo’ sins.”

Bedelia dressed much as the other Negro women did; but how well her clothes became her buxom bulk. She had a decided flair for them, and a perfect instinct. The proportions were always right, the colors good. Her full skirts would swing rhythmically when she walked. Her flat-heeled sandals gave her a free and erect carriage. She never wore the bunny-eared bandanna, but always a beautifully folded and draped turban. On ordinary occasions it was soft and gleaming white like our porcelain dinner ware.

But come Sunday, she would wear one of a Paisley pattern, brown and tan and gold. Always she wore large gold hoops in her ears.

I can still see her—vivid, striking, magnificent.

THE MULEY COW

Jonas Hollon

It was Saturday afternoon and Jack Wiggins was on his way to see his sweetheart, Cinda Perkins. Jack always looked forward to Saturday afternoons because that was the time that he could be with Cinda. He was dressed in his “Saturday’s best,” namely, blue jeans, white shirt, and a hat that was badly in need of reblocking.

It was hot that afternoon, too. Jack tried not to walk so fast, but he found it useless to try to slow himself down, because after a few steps he would be walking fast again. He was really anxious to see Cinda that day. As he walked along, he kept thinking of how kind and considerate Cinda was.

“We ain’t never had a cross word,” he said half aloud. “She’s allus satisfied to just set around home when I go to see her, an’ I’m shore mighty proud of it, too. ‘Cause I don’t want a woman that is traipsing all over the country and is allus a-wantin’ to go to some fang-dangled party.”

As he came around a bend in the road, he could see the neat little

cottage where Cinda lived. A tall maple tree cast a cool dark shadow across the well-kept lawn. He half expected to see Cinda sitting there in the shade waiting for him, but she was nowhere in sight. "Probably in th' kitchen washin' th' dishes," he thought to himself. He took a large red handkerchief from his hip pocket, and wiped away the sweat that was streaming down his face.

When he came near the gate, Rover, Cinda's big collie dog, announced his presence. Recognizing Jack, Rover lowered his head as if ashamed of himself for not knowing his master's friend, and wagged his tail to assure Jack that he was welcome. Then he came running toward Jack and playfully began to jerk his trouser legs.

By this time Cinda was out on the porch and was laughing at Jack as he pulled the playful dog slowly up the walk.

"Howdy, Cinda," Jack called cheerfully. "Some of these days this here pup of yours is goin' to tear my breeches legs plumb off."

"Turn loose, Rover. Come on in, Jack," Cinda said.

"I'm too hot to go inside just now," Jack replied. "Us set out here in th' shade for a while."

"That's all right with me, if these little sweatbees will let us alone."

They walked over and sat down in the soft, cool grass near the trunk of the maple tree. Jack did not say anything for sometime. He was too busy thinking about how pretty Cinda was and how lucky he was to have such a nice girl. There were other boys in the community—Tom Johnson, for instance—who had tried to take her away from him, but she paid them no mind. Just why she chose him, he did not know, but he did know he was very glad. He would even ask her to marry him if he knew that she would and if he was not too bashful to ask her.

"Been working hard this week?" Cinda asked, bringing Jack down again to earth.

"Not too hard. Just hoed that field of corn there above th' barn an' topped a few rows of terbakker," was Jack's answer.

"That's enough for one poor boy to do all by himself, I think," Cinda said.

"Oh, I guess I don't mind it so bad 'cause I've allus got something to look forward to on Saturday evening."

At this remark Cinda blushed a little and turned her head.

"Are you going to the dance tonight?" she asked, after she had stopped blushing.

"What dance?"

"Why, don't you know? George Toll is having a house warmin' tonight an' he has done invited us over. Th' Williams boys are goin' to make th' music, and everybody will have a big time."

"I guess they will, but I just can't go. I have t' go back home purty soon and chop wood, an' gather eggs, an' milk m' cow. By th' time I do all that, I'll be too tired to do anything 'cept sleep."

"Milk your cow? Don't you ever think of anything else but milkin' that cow at exactly the same time twice a day?"

"Somebody has to milk her. She shore won't milk herself."

"But can't you let her go just once? I don't reckon her bag would bust, would it?"

"No, I s'pose not, but that ain't exactly good for her."

"Can't you milk her a little early tonight?"

"She won't give'r milk down. Eliza is a stubborn cow."

"She ain't no more stubborn than you are, Jack Wiggins," Cinda cried.

"If she won't give her milk down, she won't give her milk down, an' there ain't nothin' I can do about it."

"All right, if you don't go with me I know somebody who will."

"Who's that?"

"Tom Johnson, that's who."

"Tom Johnson?"

"That's what I said. He don't have a cow to milk."

"So that's the way you feel about it? If I can't go with you because I have to work, you will get somebody else!"

"You heared what I said. I'll get Tom Johnson."

"Go ahead and get him, an' see what I care!"

"Well, I like that!"

"What do you want me to do? Cry?"

"Well, of all the lowdown, cheap, ornery people, you're th' worst!"

"You're not so good yourself, wantin' a poor old cow to suffer all night just because you want to go out an' kick up your heels at a square dance."

"And to think, I was thinking about marrying you when—if ever—you asked me to," Cinda said angrily.

"For Pete's sake, why don't you shut up. I'm . . . Hey! What did you say?"

"You heared what I said, but I'm glad I've found you out. You care more for your old muley cow than you do for me," Cinda said, crying a little.

Feeling that the crying was somewhat forced, Jack was more encouraged. "Do you mean that? Do you mean you will marry me?"

"I said that I would have married you if you ever asked me to, but . . ."

"Well, I'm askin' you now. Come on, us go to th' dance an' celebrate."

"But what about your cow?"

"Aw shucks, she's goin' to have to get used to some changes anyhow."

WILL IT ALWAYS?

Dolores Walker

It's like the ever-changing

But incessant momentum of rain

In instants of downpour,

That beats an unvoiced

No—

In my unhearing ear.

Then it lifts with the torrent—

Leaving a fresh, new sweetness

To the shining cleansed world—

And a faint suggestion of

Perhaps—

ALONG EDUCATIONAL LINES

Flossie Davis

Gad! How slow we're moving—only one slide of the foot at a time! I have been here since three minutes after eight, and I've gone only the length of my shadow at noon! Everybody—most of them teachers—is talking, talking—some excitedly—some idly to somebody behind or in front.

"My husband is a big eater," I hear a voice behind me say.

"Mine, too," another says. "He can eat a whole fried chicken any time."

"Fried chicken! That's exactly what I need right now—a good, greasy brown breast of a fried chicken!"

My stomach lets out a loud gurgling groan, and I force a big empty cough, hoping that it will keep anybody from hearing.

"Why didn't I eat more than a little old half of grapefruit and a cup of coffee for breakfast this morning?" I ask myself.

"Hello there!" I'm startled for a minute. I can't believe my eyes! Here stands my old friend, Johnny Dunn. "I haven't seen you since we had History 141 back in '39," he adds.

Johnny and I chat a few minutes. He tells me that he has been teaching up in Jackson county . . . "good system—swell superintendent—pay is fair."

The same old Johnny, a little older, a bit more dignified, but still gay and friendly as ever.

After he leaves, my thoughts sail back to '39 when Johnny and I sat side by side in history class. He wore a big Elgin, and every day when I had heard about enough of Charlemagne, I would restlessly demand the time.

"Five after four," he'd say.

It always was precisely that time of day, and we giggled a few times in class. The teacher was a good-natured old soul and never seemed to object.

"Oh! Excuse me." I'm suddenly startled back into '49 again by a light tap on the shoulder from the lady behind. It is my time to move, for the line has suddenly plunged forward a few inches.

My feet are aching all the way up to my hip bones.

Why in the dickens didn't I wear my black ballets instead of these painful old high-heels?

I glance at my watch—10:15. Two hours and twelve minutes, and I'm only up to the coke machine! I'll get a coke if I've got a nickel.

I rummage around in my purse for at least ten minutes and finally drag out two dimes, three pennies and a bent hairpin, but no nickel.

"Oh, well," I console myself, "I'll drop out of line up at the water fountain and cool my insides there. Cold water is better for me anyway—no calories, and I'll be saving my nickel."

I look at the change still in my hand. I hold a penny on my finger tips and look for the date. Made in 1938, the year I started to college as a freshman. My! How fast time flies! What do I mean **time** flies? Here I've been all morning trying to register! Time this morning hasn't flown. I guess years fly while minutes drag.

A clammy-skinned veteran in front of me tells me that he has transferred over from U. K. because of high rent and big prices on food. He says he was lucky to find a snug little two-room apartment with a private bath pretty close to the campus. He says he is a senior majoring in social science and that his wife was taking home ec, but she had to quit because of the baby. He says that the baby's name is George, but they call him "Slick." He's eight months old and weighs **nineteen pounds and ten ounces!** The veteran lights one Camel from the butt of another. I count eleven smashed butts on the floor. No wonder his right thumb and index finger are greenish.

A friend stops to chat with the veteran. I nearly laugh out loud when I see a big price tag dangling from the extreme rear of his obviously new trousers. I take a look at the tag. It says \$6.98.

Why doesn't this all-fired old line go on? A snail would already have had his degree and gone.

The fellow with the price tag has just pushed into the line. So, **that's** why we're moving like molasses in sub-zero. I'll bet a lot of people are squeezing in all along up front. The **nerve** of some people.

At last I can see the stairs! A pear-shaped female with cloudy eyes and a mass of mud-colored hair is drooping on the top step. Her yellow jersey dress is much too short for level ground, and at this elevation . . . well! I give my own skirt a quick tug in pure embarrassment.

We move again—11:02—two hours and fifty-nine minutes!

I'm going, going up the steps now. One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . STOP! I wonder why the sudden jolt—something farther ahead out of the line of my vision.

Oh, Lord! I'm dying, dying! Please hurry!

A fly is buzzing lazily around my head. For the want of something to do, my eyes follow him around. He is a bomber looking for a landing field.

Swish! He makes a three-point landing right in the center of a blue flower in a girl's blouse. He pauses briefly and hoists his wings as though he has suddenly thought of something he forgot and zooms off out the open window.

Wonderful sight! I have at last reached the spot where I can see the registrar's window. One, two, three, four . . . ten . . . thirteen, fourteen, people in front of me—nine women and five men.

It is 11:15 by my watch. I remember that it is three minutes fast and I turn it back to 11:12. I'd rather have a watch that gains a minute or two in a day than one that loses.

We're going a little faster now. I'm fifth from the window.

Gazing at the mail boxes in the front hall, I try to count them—

"One, two, three, four—too many people walking in front—five, six . . ."

"Your card, please!" I fumble violently through a catalog in my hands, trying to find it.

"Hurry please!" says the voice at the window again.

My goodness! Why do they get in such a hurry?

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FOREWORD

We, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, are privileged to present this annual edition, hoping that we have maintained the high literary criteria of the sixteen volumes before us.

THE ARTISTIC TOUCH

Robert C. Points

In big, black letters a menacing OFF LIMITS was printed on a weather-beaten sign at the edge of the beach.

But Joe didn't believe in signs. Why should he? War is a great equalizer. He had learned to hate regulations; his youthful dreams had turned to arrogance. The sign was a challenge.

No, Joe didn't analyze his actions, not any more. After all, this was war; one must rationalize. Now, everything stood out in sharp and clear relief. The only morality was self-preservation. It was hot, and the foaming waves were coolly inviting—that's all Joe was interested in. Joe was a realist; he told me so; he was proud of it.

"Dammit," Joe exclaimed, "why do they always put the best places off limits?"

"They probably haven't cleared this beach of mines yet," Tony, Joe's buddy, replied.

"Aw, nuts," Joe said. "This beach is too small for landing troops. The Chinks aren't stupid enough to waste mines on a little place like this. Besides, I'm hot, and no damn sign is going to keep me from taking a swim."

"Okay, okay, you're probably right," Tony said half-heartedly. "It's beautiful, isn't it, Joe?" Tony continued in a low, grave voice.

"What's beautiful?" Joe asked.

"The scenery."

"Oh, yeah, yeah. Let's take a swim."

But Tony didn't hear him. He was thinking of home. The sheer cliff colored with brownish-red streaks as if it had rusted from the constant spray of salt water, the foaming breakers roaring over broken rocks and dragging the earth back with them, and the tiny island in the distance where the sea rose up like a fat man's belly were strangely similar to the view from his tiny cottage overlooking the Pacific.

He remembered that when he was a child he had wanted to be an artist so that he could paint those lovely colors of the sea, the sky, and the cliff. He had studied hard—perhaps, too hard. A San Francisco gallery had hung a few of his impressionistic paintings and the critics said he was "promising." But that was before the war.

And he remembered the blurred, shadowy patterns formed on the shining surface of the sea as he walked with his wife and child along his own beach. But that was before the war, too.

"I'd like to paint this, Joe," Tony said.

"Why?" Joe asked. "Why don't you just take a photograph of it. My camera is in the jeep."

"You don't understand. An artist records what the mind feels, not what the eye sees. This place is quiet, peaceful, and almost alien to the world to which it belongs, to a world torn apart. I think I could show that in my painting. I have a thing or two to show this old world about art when I get out of the army."

"If you get out, you mean," Joe interrupted. "I almost got it the first day we hit." He raised his left arm, indicating a vivid red scar where a bullet had chipped a rib.

"Don't talk like that, Joe. You've got to believe in something. After all, we're fighting for what's right. I want to get this finished so I can go back to my family and live in peace."

"Sure, sure," Joe chided, "that sounds good, but if your number comes up . . . well, that's all she wrote, brother."

But Tony wasn't one to stay pessimistic long. He jumped up and ran toward the water and shouted, "Come on, let's just attack that water, now."

"Hey, wait for . . ." Joe's call was cut short as a sudden roar knocked him flat, and sand showered down upon him. He leaped up and ran toward Tony. Before long he found Tony's dog tags. Joe picked them up and walked slowly back to the jeep.

The tires screeched as he headed toward the nearest bar.

FRIENDSHIP

Harvey Woosley

Among the most perplexing problems I have encountered is friendship. People are a queer lot. Few of their actions have any reason backing them. They attend church on the Sabbath. Then they connive to swindle their fellow man on the other six days. They are willing to die for freedom. Yet, the moment that freedom is achieved, they begin looking for strong shoulders or making strong laws. For fifty weeks per year the poor creatures toil and sweat, always dreaming of that precious two-week vacation. Rest is sorely needed; but they don't rest. Those two weeks are spent in golfing, hunting, skiing, or in one of a thousand other ways designed to keep rest homes in business. But let's get back to the subject. Another of the characteristics peculiar to humans is the way they choose their friends.

Should a Gallup poll representative call upon Nicholo Schendeski, he would find that Nicholo Schendeski believes he likes Lenenti Snodnodlo for several reasons. Snodnodlo, according to Schendeski, is an almost perfect man. He is good to his family; he doesn't drink; he has a generous nature; he loses to Schendeski at poker; he is intelligent; and he keeps his cabinet well-filled. Schendeski maintains that his friend Snodnodlo has only one little fault. Snodnodlo has a laugh which shouldn't happen to a dog. That guffaw would drive a man to the madhouse. But Schendeski doesn't realize that if it weren't for that laugh—if it is Snodnodlo's only fault—they would not have become friends. They could not possibly have become friends had that guffaw not helped the matter along.

You have heard a person say, "I don't know why, but I just don't like him." The first few times this remark was addressed to me, I attempted to find a clue to the situation. Sure that the culprit discussed must have some dark blot upon his character (and not realizing how foolish I was being), I would begin probing for signs of evil. In a few weeks I would be utterly confounded when the critic and culprit were being seen about town. I have known such friendships to last for years. A man must live and learn. In the time that has elapsed since that period of my ignorance, I have learned why this "I don't know why, but I just don't like him" remark is made. According to some unwritten law, no man can be perfect. Before we can become friends of another, we must first find in what way he is imperfect. Until we find his blemish, he stands in our minds as a freak of nature. We can't trust the man until we know his weakness. Later, he may gain our undying devotion. But, first, society demands that he make some of the errors common to the species.

This complicated piece of machinery which constitutes a man possesses another queer marking. A little snobbery must be practiced while the friendship is being formed; and a few snobs must be exchanged to keep it cemented. Making the cement too thick will cause it to crack. The type of snobbery used must vary to fit the occasion and the class of society. In high circles one must watch one's self. Mrs. Society Dame remarks to a foe that the party of the second part wears an utterly charming gown—meaning, of course, that she wouldn't be seen at a dog fight in that outlandish garment. A rustic, on the other hand, should find little difficulty, and a much easier choice of words, in expressing the belief that his horse is much better than his neighbor's. Friends are at the same time adversaries, and adversaries turn to their advantage every sign of weakness. Perhaps this explains why a perfect being could never achieve social success. Those who never practice snobbery are viewed with suspicion by the practical snob. The snobber realizes that the non-snobber must be his superior. Since friendship feeds upon equality, the non-snobber is lost in this world of normals. I spent several years learning this fact; for several years I was almost friendless.

Let us examine the snob more closely. To begin with, a snob is one who has nothing to be snobbish about. For our convenience, we shall recognize him as "snob". Snob is a common person. He is not completely ignorant; neither can brilliance be used to describe him. Snob has an average education, an average car, and an average appearance. When first met, he may not

resemble the snobs you have known. Snob lives in an average section of town, has membership in an average club, and associates with an average class of people. Neighbors gossip about him; but they smile when meeting, and call to schedule a game of bridge. Snob gossips about his neighbors, monopolizes conversation, criticizes, and generally makes a nuisance of himself. It seems impossible for this description to belong all to one man. A phenomenon of this kind would not be possible if human nature were not made up of little quirks and paradoxes.

Various of the elements we have been discussing contribute toward snob's social success. Everyone fears public opinion. Everyone fears snobbery as a part of public opinion. Public opinion serves not only as a force upon which our government depends, but also as the stuff governing the direction of society. Of course, Mr. Snob has a place in the picture. His ideas are a part of public opinion. According to this line of reasoning, we may find that our government, society, and civilization rely on Mr. Snob. Since none of us are likely to concede that the member under scrutiny fills an essential place in society or the general scheme of things, we shall advance to another topic. We shall continue examining the same organism, but from another angle.

Some time ago I stated that a man without faults is a man without friends. Perhaps Snob became a snob in order to make friends. Snobs are made from environmental conditions; they are not born. Snobbery marks both as a last recourse in making friends and as a good weapon for self-protection.

Bores provide excellent material for contemplation. There are at least three classes of bores: lightly boring, extremely boring, and unbearably boring; and the unbearable class came into being with gossip. With so many interesting people, places and perplexing problems in the world, how can anyone waste time arguing, talking shop, or gossiping? Still, arguing far surpasses shop-talk or gossip as a pastime. Too, shop-talk rates a higher category than gossip.

"The best things in life are free" has become an accepted maxim. But, like many maxims, it should be opened for review. Friendship should definitely be classified as one of the best things in life. The conclusion to the implied argument is that true friendship is free. Whatever the history of "true" as an adjective, it should never have happened. Who has the authority to say whether a friend is a "friend" or a "true friend"? We use ambiguous terms of the "true" type only when we wish to confuse the issue. I have yet to hear anyone pronounce a dog a "true" dog. Friendship does have a price. It has cost me multiple woes, an uncanny number of miscellaneous articles, several months of priceless time, and a considerable amount of change. A blacked eye, a bloody nose and an ugly gash along the forehead were the result of too much friendship. In the last week, it has cost me a wrench, several gallons of gasoline, a cup of sugar, and five dollars. However, since friendship is priceless, I don't remember incidental costs of this nature.

Love can exist between persons of extremes. Paupers fall in love with millionaires; peasants fall in love with queens. Equality is not a requirement. Friends, on the other hand, must be on equal terms. Don't misunderstand. Equal terms do not apply to those matters of finance or society entirely. Nevertheless, each must feel that the other has an equal number of faults. A man doesn't dissolve an association because of the other's faults, regardless of their number. The friendship ends when he feels that he composes the lower half of an unequal situation.

The inroad of science has contributed more toward the unhappiness of mankind than any other trend throughout the era of civilization. Before science reared her ugly head, men dreamed of love, fought in the cause of freedom, and died for friendship. Too many of the age-old ideals have vanished in the face of reason. Modern double-think rationalization cannot relieve the tension. To engage in double-think rationalization would call for a perfect man. Our only salvation lies in the acceptance of these ideals as they were interpreted in ages past.

MY SON, MY SON

Shirley Spires

Ruth watched her son with a faint smile of annoyance as he tipped the ashes from his cigarette into the cuff of his rolled-up blue jeans. As he looked up she gestured inquiringly toward the three ashtrays within his reach. She knew that it was merely pretense, this air of nonchalance he had been assuming all day. He was not hiding his restlessness too successfully.

Marge, home from college for the Christmas vacation, wandered in from the hall.

"I called the florists, Dickie, and you're to pick up Janie's flowers this afternoon at five."

The answer came in a grunt from the depths of the divan and was a reasonable facsimile of okay.

His first real dance, thought Ruth, and maybe—she closed her mind to the thought. He was eighteen, and not so very long ago he had come home bearing colorful pamphlets entitled—"Young Man—Join the Navy", "Your Future in the U.S. Navy", and even one comic book with Little Abner advising all young men to join the Navy. Her heart had turned over when she saw them, and the cold empty feeling had never completely gone. She wondered if all mothers felt that way about their sons. I can't bear it, she thought.

Marge put a record on the phonograph. "Come on, Dickie, you'd better brush up on your dancing.

Dickie scowled. "I'm only going to dance twice. The first dance and the last one." But he got up to move rhythmically across the floor with her.

"It's only etiquette to dance with Janie at least three times," said Marge, "and you should dance with your sisters. Me, of course, and Barbara is going too, you know."

"I realize our family will be well represented," he retorted in what he hoped were scathing tones.

It was nearly 5:30 before Barbara's car pulled in front of the house. "Where's Dickie?" she inquired as she entered. Ruth replied vaguely that he was around somewhere. Barbara put a little blue box in the refrigerator.

"I picked up his flowers for him after I got off work. And I got him this." It was a tux shirt, which she handed to Ruth for examination.

"Very nice. It seems an awful lot to put out for one dance—a tuxedo, a shirt and everything, but still—"

Barbara nodded in mute agreement and there was a knowing silence between mother and daughter.

Dickie was not leaving for the dance until ten, although the music was starting at 9:30. Evidently the suavity of being fashionably late appealed to him on this perfect evening. However, Ruth noted that he was ready by 9:15, and he spent the rest of the time wandering aimlessly around the house, and, for a wonder, carefully preserving the immaculate appearance of his suit. By the time John, with whom he was double dating, arrived, Dickie was not able to conceal his nervousness.

John looked decidedly uncomfortable. "Can you fix my tie, Mrs. Maffet? I've fought with it for an hour." Ruth smiled and moved to help him. It was nearly 10:15 before they were finally on their way.

The clock was striking 3:30 when Ruth heard Dickie's whistle on the porch. As she turned on her bedlamp, he stuck his head in the door. "Are the girls in yet?"

"Yes, you're the last."

"Good. First time I ever got to be the last one."

"Did you have a good time, dear?" Ruth asked sleepily.

"Yep. Danced with Marge but Barbara left too soon."

"Well, lock the door before you go up."

After he had gone, Ruth found she couldn't sleep, so she went upstairs to get a sedative. She opened the door of Dickie's room.

She saw his clothes lying in their usual disorder about the room. He was

such a good boy, she thought, not like so many of the wild ones who drank. He was still a baby in so many ways.

The light from the hall was shining on his face and she could see his features relaxed in deep, untroubled slumber. The biblical phrase fledited through her mind, "But when I became a man, I put away childish things" . . .

She saw him as a little boy, screaming when she left the room. "Wait, Mommy! I want us to walk along together!" They had always been so close, she and her son.

She saw the colorful pamphlets, bright against the carpet, and the words, "Young Man, Join the Navy!"

And her eyes burned.

GROWING PAINS

Dolores Walker

I was always happy when I came home from school and mother would allow me to visit Mrs. Warburton. Her house was just a run down our back flat stairs across the gravel driveway that separated us from the friendly Jacksons, through the vacant lot where the tall sunflowers turned at my will into smiling ladies-in-waiting or fierce renegade Indians crouched stealthily to capture a scalp from an unsuspecting victim.

When I had crossed the burning desert I was escorted into the big, dark green pantry and amply rewarded with a snow white powdered donut. They were excellent donuts, and if they were a little bit stale I never noticed. Mrs. Warburton was an excellent housekeeper, and after I had licked my fingers clean, we went through the spotless kitchen and under an ornately-carved arch to my favorite room, the parlor. The shades were usually drawn and the room had a peculiar cool dampness that I have never been able to relate to any other place. In one corner was a huge mohair chair sitting like a prim, rigid old woman on spindly legs. She had a stiffly starched lace doily for a collar and I never ventured to use her lap. In a far corner from the old woman was a similar love seat which for a long time had been sadly neglected.

Squatting in the midst of the grey and black rivers that intervened along the marble-topped black walnut table was a grotesque lamp which, except for its huge ugliness, might have been Aladdin's Lamp.

When I entered the room my eyes sought first—fearful they might not be there, though in reality I knew they were staunchly secured from their respective positions on the wall—two pictures. One was a lion in lazy repose, the other an equally tame looking tiger. It didn't take much for them to change either into roaring, raging beasts of the jungle or sincere, loyal companions who astonished people as they accompanied me on my adventurous journeyings. Mrs. Warburton stimulated my imagination with wonderful stories of a brave boy named Daniel in a lion's den or tales of a courageous lad stowed away on a pirate ship or of fairy princesses rescued from cruel, wicked witches. A long time ago she had had a little boy who had grown away from my two friends on the wall and the books that filled the walnut table shelves, and she knew many stories to feed my hungry imagination.

I always left her house clutching some flowers or a little mint for mother's iced tea. When mother, swollen and quiet, went to the hospital, Mrs. Warburton fixed my dinner and took care of me until daddy came home and said I had a little sister. I was happy to have a sister, and I couldn't wait till little sister would be able to visit Mrs. Warburton with me.

Exciting new things happen every day in a child's life to compensate for our moving across the city and eventually out of the state away from Mrs. Warburton and everything I had learned to expect from the dark green pantry and cool, damp living room. Little sister never learned about her.

Years later when we returned to visit relatives we never went to see Mrs. Warburton. I was a big girl now and I had to realize that she too was included in the "it just isn't being done" category that came with growing up. I could very easily see why it just wasn't being done! Understanding adults and other growing children had helped me see the light.

My friend Mrs. Warburton was too dark.

SONNET

Shirley Spires

And so, my dear, 'tis useless to assume
We could preserve from our ill-fated past
A portion of the love once in full bloom;
'Tis foolish to pretend that it would last.
How angered we the gods, so they, in turn,
Embarred us in such hopeless circumstance?
Why needed it be else but our concern
If we, aware and willing, stood the chance?
We should not risk it, lest again we fail
And thus increase our mutual misery.
The fates are wicked, anxious to impale
Our fruitless love with barbarous irony.
But then again—why should we fear to choose?
How can we fail with nothing more to lose?

ULTIMATUM

Shirley Spires

Only till this cigarette is finished
And the embers burn my hand
Will I think of you.
Slow-burning fire again will be diminished—
Only this time I will stand
Chief fireman—not you.
I wish you could be here so you could say
How it feels to be but ashes in a tray.

A SOPHISM

John Park

The room had a weird underwater look. It was filled with blue-gray smoke from many cigarettes which softened the forms of people and furniture. Elaine dragged comfortably on hers while watching Louis, feeling the sleepy tingling inside of her, then lazily letting the smoke flow into the room. Louis was snoring gently in the chair beside her, head leaning back, legs stretched loosely in front of him. Even though she had just met Louis, she knew she liked him; the dull conversation, the foolish way his mouth hung open while he slept. She glanced at the initials he had written in the dust, wondering what his last name was, but not really caring. His finger still had flecks of gray on it. Louis would take her home after his evening of quiet intimacy over cloudy cocktails and cigarettes. A thought of the escort she had come with occurred to her, but she put it aside, too content to trouble with it. Too bad Louis had fallen asleep. She nudged him gently and he woke up peering at her, his face softening into recognition.

He got them drinks and they settled down into dull conversation which neither listened to. She watched his calm eyes move, slowly taking in the room. A small, yellow glint appeared and disappeared in them as he lit his cigarette and blew out the match. She couldn't take her eyes from the faint red of the burning end and the glowing ash, waiting for it to fall. He noticed the initials on the table and blew them softly away, watching the dust scurry across the smooth top and lose itself in the smoke. She could see him wondering who she was. She hoped he wouldn't ask her, for that would destroy their strange intimacy. He must have seen that too, for he didn't ask. He said they would go, and they swam through the thick smoke to the door.

Outside, the night was wet and foggy; a soft mist was clinging to everything. The moon was a patch of gray. She waited in soft content for him to bring his car around, but he was gone.

THE SCAR

Alma Jean Hedden

Marcia lay motionless in the bed, listening to the noises drifting up the stairs from the kitchen. That would be her mother, of course, fixing Penny's breakfast before she left for work.

Hatred welled in Marcia and seemed to smother her, and she pictured her family just as she knew they would be.

Hazel Harrison had been left with two small daughters to support when her husband had died ten years ago. Marcia was blond, blue-eyed, and remarkably beautiful. Penny was somewhat like a shadow of her sister with brown hair, brown eyes, but nice looking in her own way. Hazel loved her children to the point of worship. She unconsciously dominated their home and spent her days working for them. She tried to be both a father and a mother to both her children.

Hazel didn't seem to notice the lack of affection between the two girls that had begun when Penny had accidentally burned Marcia on the cheek with a hot poker. Neither did she notice the inferiority complex that Marcia developed because of the scar on her cheek.

Penny finished dressing and ran lightly down the stairs. Her thoughts turned first to her mother, who she hoped had breakfast ready, and then to Marcia. She wouldn't be up yet—Marcia never was. She was so distant and seemed to repel every advance Penny had ever made toward a better understanding between them. Then she walked into the kitchen.

"I'll take over, Mother. You get ready for work," Penny called gaily.

"No, I'll finish," said Hazel. "You sit down and eat your breakfast."

Penny sat down at the table and for a long time sat, saying nothing, looking into space. Once or twice her mother glanced in her direction.

"Mother," Penny said at last, "is something wrong with me or Marcia? I can't seem to get close to her."

"Don't worry, Penny. You know as well as I that Marcia has always been hard to understand. She's only nineteen. She'll grow out of it. Oh, it's time to leave. I'll see you at six, Penny."

"Wait," said Penny. "I'll walk part of the way with you."

Marcia heard the door slam and jumped from the bed. For weeks the plan had been forming in her mind, and now she had it figured out completely. So Penny just couldn't understand her. Well, after today she wouldn't have to try.

A long hard chill shook her body and she reached for a cigarette. She blew small smoke rings as she tried to remember where she had put the knife somebody had given her as a war souvenir. She got up and pawed through her clothes and bureau drawers. Then she remembered the handkerchief box.

The knife was there, hidden in the soft folds of the handkerchiefs. She lifted the knife and walked over to the mirror. With the tip of the long, thin blade she traced the scar on her cheek.

Suddenly she gave a hysterical laugh and staggered over to the bed. She could see the shocked look that would come over Penny's face when she realized what was going to happen.

Marcia looked over the room she had just finished cleaning. She had been working hard for the past two hours. The evening meal was ready. She looked at her watch and saw that she would have time to look through a magazine before Penny and her mother came home.

In a half hour Penny and Hazel burst in the door.

"Let's eat," said Penny. "I'm hungry as a bear."

They went into the kitchen and sat down at the table.

"Now, that was what I call a fine meal," Penny said when she had finished. Looking over at Marcia, she smiled. "You really fed us tonight. Some kind of celebration?"

"Well, in a way," replied Marcia. Suddenly she began to laugh and before anyone could stop her, fled from the room.

"As I said this morning," complained Penny, "you simply can't understand Marcia. Look how she left the room when I asked her a simple question. I tell you, something's wrong with her, Mother."

"Don't worry, Penny," said Hazel. "Your personalities are just different, that's all. You're like me and Marcia is more like her father; forget it. She'll be all right."

"Mother," Penny asked thoughtfully, "did you notice how red the scar was on Marcia's cheek? It must be bothering her again. I hope not, because she always seems to go into a shell when it does. Oh well, what are you going to do tonight?"

"I thought you could do the dishes for Marcia, and I might go to a movie. Okay?"

"Okay with me," replied Penny.

"All right. I'll leave now and be home by ten." Mrs. Harrison walked to the foot of the stairs and called to Marcia that she was leaving. There was no response so she turned to go.

"Well, finally!" thought Marcia. She ground out her cigarette and paced the floor. She knew that Penny would be up to see what was the matter with her. Curiosity always was Penny's second name. She'd have to find out what little Marcia was doing.

"Now what was that old saying?" Marcia wondered. "Curiosity killed the cat. How appropriate. Why, that's hilarious." The wild hysterical laughter racked her body once more.

The sound of someone's knocking on her door brought Marcia to her senses. She glanced at the mirror and saw that the scar was an ugly purple in her white face. Her blue eyes were black and glassy. She walked slowly to the door.

"Now I must remember not to kill her. I'll just cut her enough to scar her. Like she did to me."

She turned and took the knife from the table. Slowly she walked to the door and stood waiting.

"Marcia, open up. It's Penny. Are you all right?"

Marcia opened the door and Penny came into the room. Marcia slammed the door and, before Penny knew what was happening, Marcia had knocked her to the floor. Marcia grabbed Penny's neck with the wild strength of hatred. She raised the knife so Penny could see it.

"Hello, Penny," Marcia cried. "I've been waiting for you."

A look of fear came into Penny's eyes. "You're going to kill me," she said.

"Oh no, Penny. I'm not going to kill you. That would be too easy. I'm just going to cut you a little. Scar you as you did me. That wasn't any accident either. You were jealous. We'll see how you like having an ugly scar on your face!"

A scream rose in Penny's throat. She felt the cold sweat of fear and forced her eyes to look away from the knife.

"You're mad," she said.

Marcia laughed and started to lower the knife. A blinding streak of pain went through Penny. Then she lay limp on the floor.

In a dazed silence Penny rose to her feet. There was an ugly gash from her ear to her chin. The blood covered the left side of her face. She staggered to her feet several times before she was able to make the bed.

"What's happening to me?" thought Marcia. "I feel so funny."

Marcia walked to the mirror. "Penny said I was mad." Marcia began to laugh. She had never heard anything so funny in her life.

"You're mad! You're mad!" Penny kept repeating as she came from under the anesthetic. She was in a small white room and her mother was standing over her. Then she realized where she was and jerked herself up in the bed.

"Where's Marcia?" she shouted. A doctor came into the room. He explained to Penny that she was all right. There would be no scar, because they had used plastic surgery.

Later Penny learned that Marcia was in a rest home. The doctors thought they might be able to help her.

Penny turned her head to the wall. "Poor Marcia," she thought. "No one really tried to understand her or help her." Guilt spread over her, and she turned her face to the wall again as the tears came into her eyes.

NOTHING BUT THE SEA

H. Edward Richardson

Did tyranny once goad the dreams of your fathers
In the savage rushing sea?
Did death spread its broad canopy
Over their gallant plodding?
Did they seek more for their own than dignity,
Leaving furrows bathed incarnadine
With what might have been kept to a lesser end?

Now, spanning the blood-rows are the wide clear ways
And the golden plant in the fertile ground and the days
When our world has been gold and blue,
Then, the time too
Without any gold, without any blue,
The time of the threatening sound,
When the canopy
Came unnaturally.

Some have forgotten and cried, and you are one of those.

Here, your heritage you keep and caress,
While it dissolves to nothingness.
And the savage sea will come rushing in
To drown you in ignominy.

Your broken father will break the clod
And weep for you as you float like a faggot
In the savage rushing sea:

“Son, Man is base and cruel till learned.
We left you the hope to keep.

Did the great wild arms of freedom embrace you
in this land?”

TO P.B.M.

J. Dallas Miller

I'll give unto you, love, this new found rest
Wherein your heart will warm my own, and bide
In tender love—relaxed within my breast.
And while my restless fingers lie inside
Your own still palm, then you will surely rend
The veil between our minds, and so, in token
My soul I give and take yours, dear. I'll bend
You close till darkness by the dawn is broken.
Then will He come and blend us into one;
Then will I find the clearness in my soul
As a new day, fresh under the warm sun,
Lifting my life into a greener whole.
Now pause a moment, will you? While I pray,
Thanking the Lord for such a perfect day.

A ROOM OF HER OWN

Shirley Spires

The clock in the downstairs hall struck, sounding each chime with an air of finality. Two a.m., Dora asserted to herself, and closed the book she had been reading. Now I shall go to sleep without further ado, she told herself sternly. There was no reason to dread the dark. The doors and windows were securely fastened, and behind other not too distant doors her

family slept serenely. And yet she would lie awake, night after night, in fear and apprehension of some nameless horror that dwelt in the seclusion of the dark.

With a supreme effort she pulled the chain of her bedlamp—thus surrendering the room to darkness. It had never been like this in the little house, loose boarded and secluded from neighborly assistance. She had slept with her sister in a small room of assorted furniture and a nondescript color scheme. In those days her greatest desire was that she would some day have a room of her own. She planned the arrangement and color scheme in her mind and knew that if her dream was realized, she would always experience a great feeling of elation whenever she entered that haven which she would call her own.

Moving to a larger house was the result of a better-paid position, much planning, and a not too pressing loan, but to Dora it was a miracle, an answer to a prayer. Little had she dreamed that she would suffer the agonies of wakeful fear that seemingly had no cause or cure.

Was it a sound or slight movement, as if to suggest a light footfall on the stairs that caused her to grow rigid with painful familiarity. Frantically, clumsily, she pulled the chain of the bedlamp. Warm, mellow light assured her that once again she had been the victim of pure cold fear. There was nothing. She opened the door to the hall. Again she found complete emptiness.

I will not turn on the lamp again, she silently determined. I will not. I will—there it was again! She felt the nearness of another physical presence, and the next second she was convinced she heard its breathing. Her heart was pounding and her hands were clammy. Another agonizing second and she was groping desperately for the chain—her assurance—her saviour.

It was a mystery to everyone why Dora Appleton died in the night with stark fear written on her pale little face. Mrs. Creighton and Hannah, her housekeeper, discussed the tragedy in properly respectful tones as they moved quietly around the death-room.

"I just felt I should do something, Hannah. Poor Mrs. Appleton is just beside herself with grief. That's why I told her we'd straighten up this room for her." She examined the closet and the bookshelves. "Such a pity, Hannah—a sweet, shy girl like that."

Hannah pulled the chain of the bedlamp. "Do you want I should fix this lamp, Mrs. Creighton? Bulb's burnt out."

THE WAITING

Pat Lackey

In solitude I sit and wait
For night to cover me.
The coolness of the dark slips over me
As I sit by the window and watch.

For what am I watching?
Not the darkness nor the light.
I wait in tenseness for a sound
That will say, "You are not alone."
But it lies—that voice.
For I am alone—strangely and terribly alone.

No one is so lonely as I
Since I have lost the light and
Found this terrible, cold darkness.
If death would come—then
I should know light—
The light of Heaven!
And I would never more be blind.

IF LIFE BE THUS

Ray Webb

If life be thus
And lust is all;
What profit you and I?
If day be done
And lust has won;
Then one should die.
If life be thus
And God is all;
We profit you and I,
When life is done
And God has won;
Then one doesn't die.

OVERSHADOWING AMBITION

Dolores Walker

Tonight when the rain ceased—
the clouds parted,
leaving wonderful, soft white fields
to explore!

We marveled—
content with the bright beauty offered
by the moon
patterned through the trees.

Tomorrow the fresh newness
would be lost to a sedulous world
like a watercolor
Whose magic reality has been subject to a
feverishly overworked brush.

EMBARKATION

H. Edward Richardson

The sun had four hours ago gone its long way down one warm night of early summer in the central-southern town of Philosophy Hill. Upon the college campus the chimes forced out nine sonorous rings. The early night was hot. Up and down Main Street the people moved slowly. At the edges of town the honeysuckle and mock-orange exuded their sweetness into the faintest breeze which wafted the rich fragrances over the outlying streets and to the nostrils of lazy walkers, men in shirts with rolled-up sleeves, and women in crisp print dresses heavily starched. All of this was normal, all except the oppressiveness; there was some dim significance in the heaviness of the atmosphere. The walkers and the people on the front porches and the loafers on the corners and about the courthouse felt it; yet the night was not extremely hot. A few in Philosophy Hill knew, as the ponderous night wrung out the drops of nine o'clock from the towel-white tower high on the campus ridge, that this stifling weight was the momentary hover of Death over a small southern town.

Separated from Main Street by a sidewalk, a plate-glass window, and several tables and chairs, four young men of Philosophy Hill drank coffee and listened to a nickelodeon. Even the music seemed to escape from the speaker, pierce the air, not flow upon it, and the conversation among the four came as slow as the music, and as their movements.

"La-de-da-da-da-da-da, de-da-de-da-de-da-da." One of them hummed a rough interpretation of the **Third man Theme**. This was Ansel McKinney who had lived in Philosophy Hill all of his life, but then all four had for that

matter. McKinney was the oldest, complacent about all things, and he had neither the heart nor the desire to finish college which he could have done seven years earlier. The other three were still in college. Jonas Hatfield was a law student at the state university, and his one distinguishing physical characteristic was his corpulent frame which had earned him the nickname of "Tank." His voice had a certain raucous quality which gave it the annoying property of carrying great distances. To Tank, however, his voice was his greatest asset, for he had envisioned himself as a political power in the county, and his somewhat work-shy labors were toward that end. Tank's favorite and rather banal saying was: "I'm a man with no prejudices, that is none except against niggers, Catholics, Jews, and foreigners!" Many times this expression brought a laugh and enabled Tank to realize the position he desired so fervently, that of being the center of attraction. The other two men were really boys, both of them about twenty years old. Engle Hisle was bookish, cynical, small, and anemic. He wore black-rim glasses and his hair was straight and unkept; for the years he had been alive, a disease of the lungs had forced him from the normal activities of boys his own age into a dim world of seclusion, a book-world, and he formed his ideas not from living, but from reading. It was natural for Engle Hisle to be different, perhaps sensitive, but somehow those who knew him could not justify his bitter sarcasm, which flew out spasmodically at anyone who might be within the range of his vindictiveness. So Hisle, with his perverted brilliance, with all of the vast knowledge he had stored in his brain while others his age were living genuinely, was not exactly desired company; people who knew him best, his only friends, felt mixed emotions upon his arrival, happy to see him still alive, yet dreading his inevitable bitterness.

Arnold Creighton, the last of the four, was a brown-haired boy of medium build who smoked a pipe and listened more than he talked.

"Anybody seen Don Wylie tonight?" Ansel McKinney asked, ceasing his humming.

"That prestidigitator?" Hisle remarked.

"The last time he was seen, according to the latest report of the manure spreader," said Creighton, "he was pulling shot glasses of 'Old Fitz' out of his handkerchief."

"Prestidigitation means juggling," Hatfield interrupted.

"Or digging bodies up out of the cemetery," McKinney said to Creighton.

"I say it means juggling," Hatfield shouted.

"What does he want with bodies?" Creighton asked McKinney.

Hisle said: "Helps his act, Arnold, the guillotine act."

"Gives authentic odor of chopped-off heads . . . also authentic heads," McKinney added. Hatfield was just preparing to erupt when McKinney turned to him and said that prestidigitation covered all forms of legerdemain.

"Damn," Hatfield said, "I thought it meant juggling."

"Here comes Wylie," McKinney said. The door of the restaurant opened and a tall, dark youth in a whipcord suit walked toward the table. He was evidently nervous, sidling quickly to their table. He had been smoking, and he dropped his cigarette and stepped on it. "I just saw Souther Shannon die."

For a brief time there was silence over the group. Creighton asked, "Where?"

"The Funeral Home, of all the god-awful places," Wylie replied. He flipped a cigarette into the corner of his mouth. "His pulse beat was 160 per minute."

"God," Hatfield said, and then, oddly, laughed.

"He drank himself to death," Wylie stated tragically.

"What brand?" Hisle asked.

"It wasn't very pretty, Hisle," Wylie snapped. His dark eyes began to fill with anger, began to glint like dark flint in pale light, as Wylie lit his cigarette. Suddenly he spun on his heels and walked rapidly to the door. Over his shoulder he said: "They all thought he was dead when they brought him in! Thought he was dead! And the poor sonofabitch began gasping on the slab and I thought his heart was going to beat out of his chest." Just

before he slammed the door, he shouted, "Hisle, I'll try to save you his bottle."

"Drink only bonded," Hisle said, but the door had shut and Wylie didn't hear the remark.

"What's eating him?" Hatfield said.

"Shock," McKinney answered, "just disturbed at seeing a human being die."

"I can't understand the loss. Who lost in Philosophy Hill by Souther Shannon's death?" Hatfield asked. Then he laughed. "The old racker almost shot his boy last week. Been crazy as hell lately."

"Society has lost an adept racker of pool balls," Hisle stated. Then he wondered aloud: "Do you suppose Wylie will save me the bottle if it's bourbon?"

Mable Clancy waddled by the table. She had been wiping off the table behind them. She leaned over in their midst and said: "Well, I guess his wife is free now."

Only Hatfield laughed aloud.

"Who could have liked, much less live with the old drunk cripple?" Mable asked. Then she reached up above the table and snapped off one of the lights. "Closing time," she said.

The four arose very slowly, walked to the counter.

"Odd man for 'em," Creighton said.

They flipped a coin, and after three flips Creighton laid a quarter on the counter. Mable, by that time, had gone behind the counter. She gave Creighton a nickel in change.

Outside the rain had begun to fall lightly. "Where to now?" Hatfield asked.

"Got some wine in the car," McKinney said. He thrust his hands into his trouser pockets and began walking across the street. The others followed. Creighton and Hisle were talking. "What did Mable mean about Souther's wife being free now?" Creighton asked.

"Some rumor about him being cuckold, I guess."

"I know, but . . ."

McKinney broke in, "I think it happened in the accident five years ago. You know right afterwards he started drinking heavily."

"You mean the accident made him . . ."

"Yeah," McKinney said, "impotent as an octogenarian."

"Then it was suicide in a way," Creighton stated.

Hatfield had been swaying wide of the group. He had spoken to some walkers and then had swung back and heard Arnold Creighton say something about suicide, and he had sensed that they were speaking of Souther Shannon, for a week before Souther had publicly announced in the pool room that he was going to take poison or blow his brains out. "Hell," Hatfield shouted, "what'dye mean, suicide? Suicide!" He laughed loud and long, his laughter echoing up and down Main Street. "Why, he didn't have the guts. He just drank himself to death."

Across the street the last of the lights went out in the restaurant. The four passed on over a hill that crossed Main Street. They paused at the car while McKinney unlocked it, and then they all got in.

"Whom can we toast?" McKinney asked, taking the wine bottle from the glove compartment.

"The Republican party," Hatfield said triumphantly.

"I'm a Communist and can't drink to that," Hisle said.

Creighton lit a cigarette, inhaled the smoke deeply and the smoke escaped between his words, "Well, we could toast Souther, gentlemen."

McKinney raised the bottle and said: "Here's to the pool balls who will be lonely." Hisle twisted in his seat and remarked, "Wonder if that Wylie will bring me that bourbon?" Creighton and McKinney chuckled lightly and Hatfield said: "To hell with the drunkard." But they all drank in turns.

Up on Main Street, by the corner where the four had passed, a young woman was standing, holding a baby in her arms. The baby was sobbing in little gasps which would increase in volume as the mother rocked it in her arms. "Shush . . . shush . . . shushsh. Cupcake, Daddy will be by soon. He'll

be here soon." She brushed the light drops of rain from the baby's blanket with a crumpled handkerchief. "Shush," she was whispering, and then she jumped back from the corner quickly. A new Studebaker had leapt up the hill to Main Street, swerving close to the curb. It did not even slow, but sped up and darted across Main Street toward the high ridge of the college. Beneath the wheel a boy and girl were closed within themselves. As the automobile disappeared into the black street in the valley below, and began the slow climbing of the long slope to the college, the woman moved slowly back to the curb. Wearily she said: "No, Cupcake. That wasn't Daddy."

WISH FOR LIFE

Grace VanOver

I wish my tongue could speak the way I feel
When I see daisies blooming on a hill
Or watch a wheat field move in gentle sway,
And meadow larks wing out to greet the day.

Oh, if my pen could move in magic worth
And capture Beauty as she blesses earth
With loveliness beyond my mortal thought!
(Ah, Beauty that is not sold or bought!)

I would my pen were made of lilies fair,
The sky my parchment—set with diamonds there.
Even then I couldn't tell the way I feel
When I hear larks, see daisies on a hill.

GETTING RICH

Ernest Kincaid

Early one summer morning I was awakened by the loud calls of my father. He was shouting at the top of his voice trying to awaken the three sleeping boys upstairs. Finally I answered him, but when I looked out the window I noticed it was still quite early. My two brothers were awake too but they showed no signs of getting out of bed. I turned over, pulled the blanket, which was almost on the floor, over me, and decided to sleep awhile longer.

"You boys," boomed my father, "Get up or I'll come up there with a bucket of water."

Not wishing to get soaked, and knowing that if we remained in bed any longer, we would certainly have water dashed on us, we all hit the floor.

"Wonder why Pa gets up so early," my younger brother asked as he staggered sleepily around the room looking for his clothes.

"Must be aiming to chop some corn, down on the river," my other brother remarked. "Looks like we would get a day off ever once in a while."

We dressed and went downstairs. Breakfast was on the table, and to our great surprise, we noticed that Pa was all dressed up. We all made a dive for the wash pan, and while we were washing Bill whispered hopefully, "Pa must be a-goin' to town. If we'll be right quiet and keep him talking about something, maybe he'll forget t' tell us what t' do."

Every time Pa went to town he left a whole string of work for us to do while he was gone. We knew better than to not do the work well, because he always inspected it the minute he came home. If it wasn't done to suit him, we always had to do it over, and he watched by Pa as we did it. Every weed had to be cut, every potato or bean bug had to be killed, every hill of corn had to be thinned or we would suffer the unpleasant consequences.

We knew the garden was getting weedy and that Ma had been trying to get Pa to take a day off from the corn field and work in the garden. If only the subject of the weedy garden was not mentioned at the breakfast table. It was too wet to plow corn, and Pa wouldn't send us to the river to chop corn

and the steeps, because he knew we would stay in the river all day instead of chopping corn. He didn't trust us in the tobacco patch because we had a very bad habit of breaking or cutting the tender plants. The garden was the only place we could work, and if he should forget to tell us about it, we would have the day off.

He must have had some very important business in town that day because he forgot to tell us any work to do.

That was the day my brother and I were going to get independently rich. There was a war on and prices were sky high. Even may-apple root was four cents a pound, and we knew where there was a virgin patch of it. Ma tried to get us to work in the garden, but we talked her out of it. We told her a fellow offered to sell us a .22 rifle for a dollar and we were going to buy it with may-apple money. Feeling proud because her sons had at last decided to "root" for themselves, or just glad to get us and the lousy dog away from the house, she told us to go dig our fortune.

We went to the corn crib, got several burlap sacks, a bushel basket, and some gooseneck hoes, and headed for the woods. Gricks, our little black, fuzzy poodle dog, was tickled to death. He would run ahead of us for awhile, then he would run back and grab hold of our pant legs and almost jerk us down. He was good at things like that—had more sense than some folks I know—but I'll be darned if he would run a rabbit or a squirrel. He would catch polecats, though—I don't know why, but he just would. Ma wouldn't let him in the house if he had caught a polecat. She said he smelled too bad, but she let us come in and we smelled just as bad as the dog.

It was still rather early when we entered the woods. We could hear the dew dropping on the green leaves of the trees. Across the hollow a squirrel let us know by his squawking that he was not one bit afraid of us. Gricks started to chase it awhile, but seeing the deep canyon he would have to cross, and also knowing he could not catch it even if he tried, he just let it squawk and trotted on down the trail.

As we neared our may-apple patch, we saw some very unpleasant signs. Someone had been there ahead of us. What was once a fine patch of may-apple was now only a naked spot in the woods with an occasional pile of dead may-apple stalks scattered about. We were disappointed, but we were madder than we were disappointed. Now we couldn't buy the rifle. Ma didn't have the money to buy it for us, and we couldn't ask Pa because if he knew he wouldn't let us buy the gun.

We threw our sacks, hoes, and basket on the ground and sat down on a big rock. The dog walked about for awhile as if looking over the situation then he too sat down. He would look at the dug up may-apple patch, then snap at a bee or an oversized yellow-jacket—then he would get up and move around some more. After while he walked over to us, his tail between his legs, his head lowered, and his glittering brown eyes looking at the three boys sitting side by side, their bare feet dangling from the big rock, and he seemed to say: "Well, boys, looks like we didn't get rich after all. Dang that bee!"

OUR HIRED "GIRL"

Betty Stewart

When Mary, the girl who was working for us, got married, my mother asked her to help us find another hired girl.

Mary was from a remote section of Floyd County where people around home went to hire girls to work for them. It was usually easy to find a girl, for the girls were eager to get away from home. The girls were good workers; therefore, at the time we lost Mary too many people had found out their worth, and we found it hard to get a good one.

After talking to her relatives and friends Mary came to Mother with disappointing news. She had not been able to find a girl who would be suitable to work for us, but she had a suggestion. It seemed that she had a young brother who was anxious to get away from Mud Creek, their home. She told Mother that Beverly had always helped around the house and was a good

worker. Being desperate by the time, Mother said that she would try him for two weeks.

On the afternoon Beverly came, my sister, my brother, and I waited at the window peeping from behind the curtain at the young man walking up the front steps. He was a stocky boy with pale, blue eyes and straight, black hair which he had slicked down close to his head with hair oil. In one hand he carried a brown paper bag which contained his clothes, and in the other a chicken. When we saw what he was carrying we giggled a little too loudly. Beverly heard us and looked toward the window where we were standing. This scared us, so we ran back to the chairs where Mother had seated us before she went to greet Beverly.

As Mother walked into the room with Beverly, we were sitting quietly in our chairs with polite expressions on our faces. As Mother told him our names, he grasped in the brown paper bag and brought forth a smaller brown paper bag which contained candy he had made before leaving his home. He gave this bag of candy to my sister and told her to divide it. Mother took him to his room, and we went outside to play.

The next time we saw Beverly was a few hours later in the kitchen. He was sitting in a chair with a pan of potatoes held between his knees and another pan containing water—held between his feet on the floor. He was peeling the potatoes, putting the peeled ones in the pan of water, and singing an old Baptist hymn to himself. He would say one line of the hymn and then sing it.

When he had finished peeling the potatoes, he took the pan from between his knees and the one from the floor to a work table. He left there and picked up an apron which he wore until he had finished all his work for the evening.

Our hired "girl" always wore an apron over clean but faded work shirts and pants as he went about the house slowly and precisely doing his work. He kept his sleeves rolled above his elbows, for he had his hands in and out of water several times each day. He swept every room in the house, mopped all the rooms every day. Every other day he mopped the rooms upstairs as well.

Mother was so well satisfied with Beverly that he stayed two years instead of two weeks. He took over much of the work that Mother had always done when we had hired girls working for us. He did all the laundry, ironing, washing dishes, sweeping, dusting, mopping, and most of the cooking. When canning season came, he did most of the canning also.

The first year he was with us he taught my Mother how to pickle beans and corn. He made toys for my sister, my brother, and me. For my brother he made a bow and some arrows, a wooden gun that shot mason jar rubber rings, and a pair of stilts. He made buckeye dolls and clothes for them for my sister and me.

When winter came and Beverly could not go home on his day off, he stayed there at home and did the work as usual. He found time to play with us after he had done his work each day. He taught us games and played them with us to keep us inside on the days when it was too bad for us to go outside. When the snow was deep enough, he made snow cream for us and helped us make snow men. He pulled us on our sleigh on level ground and fixed a slick slide for us on the hill.

During this same winter, Beverly asked Mother if she had any scraps of material. She had, so she gave them to him. He took them to his room and a few weeks later he brought Mother a quilt top he had made with his hands from the scraps of material she had given him. Before the winter was over he had made another one using a different pattern.

The first time Beverly went home when spring came, he took the two quilt tops with him and brought them back quilted. He gave these to Mother along with two goose down pillows he had made for her from the feathers of the geese his mother raised.

Beverly's second year with us was a repetition of the first one. It was during this year that his parents moved from Mud Creek to where we lived.

In August Beverly went home for a week to cook for a "meeting" his parents were having for a child of theirs who had been dead several years.

This "meeting" was for the purpose of preaching the child's funeral again. Friends and relatives of theirs came from all over Floyd, Perry, and Knott counties. When everyone had visited and gossiped for a while, preparations were made for the preaching. The child's picture was placed before the congregation just before the preaching started. One man would preach until he was tired, and then another would take his place. Before each one started his sermon, he led the congregation in a song. He would say a line and the congregation would sing it, and continue in this manner until the song was sung. Each song had the same tune.

While the preaching and singing were going on, Beverly was in his mother's kitchen preparing food for the people who had come to the "meeting."

We began realizing how much Beverly meant to us during the week he was at his home. When the "meeting" was over and Beverly came back to us, we were overjoyed to see him.

Beverly went out of our lives again soon after that, and that time forever. His father was injured in the coal mines, so Beverly had to go home and take his father's place as the earner of the family. My father gave him a job in the coal mine as a coal loader.

Today Beverly still loads coal. He is unmarried and lives with his parents. His mother is old now, and Beverly does the work at home after he comes in from his job of loading coal. One evening each week Beverly can be seen hanging out the week's laundry.

THE OLD COUNTRY CHURCH

Jonas Hollon

Nestled in the hills and valleys of Eastern Kentucky are hundreds of small country communities made up of a church, a school, a postoffice, a general store, and several dwelling houses. A narrow road—usually unpaved—winds its way up and down hills, across level valleys, and along the banks of rushing mountain streams. In such communities live a strange variety of people. These people fear no one except God. They live and work together, sharing their joys and sorrows, yet ready to fight one another at the slightest provocation. Their arguments are frequently settled without resorting to the courts. They are willing to cheat their neighbor or to deal fairly with him if either occasion proves necessary.

In these communities there is always a person who has a reputation for trading. Sometimes he cheats, sometimes he doesn't, but if anyone has anything to trade he is Johnny on the spot. His cows never get older than six years, his horses seldom over four, even though the poor brutes are sometimes twenty—they trade better if the owner can keep them young.

If these people are always willing to cheat their neighbor, they are also ready to help when disaster strikes. If a home burns, everybody gives all he can spare to the homeless neighbor. If someone is sick, friends are not lacking.

These people work, fuss, play, trade, and cheat during the week, but on Sunday they all gather at the community church—sometimes it is a church, other times it may be a school house—to worship God together. They forget their worries and cares of the week part and all unite with bowed heads and uplifted voices in a prayer for the special blessing of God.

It was the fourth Sunday in August that I found myself in one of these communities. As I drove along the dusty road, a feeling of peace and happiness came over me. Nowhere could I remember ever feeling more at home or more welcome than I felt that day. The fields of waving corn, the patches of greenish-yellow tobacco, and the rustic homes surrounded by majestic, shivering, silver-leaved maples, all played a part in making me feel the way I did.

I soon came to the church house. It was not a fancy structure. It was merely a white, boxed building sitting atop a small knoll. The windows and doors were plain, and there was no bell nor steeple; yet this building was

greatly admired by those people. They had all had a part in its construction, some giving money, others giving their labor.

There were several cars parked along the road near the church. Horses were tied to many of the small saplings just outside the churchyard. People were coming in all directions to the church.

I got out of my car, walked across the foot-bridge built across the creek, heard the hollow thomp-thomp of my feet striking the wooden planks of the bridge, and walked into the churchyard. The men were all outside, some sitting on the stumps of trees, others squatting or standing. These men were chatting, whittling, chewing that last chew of tobacco before the service, trading knives, or arguing. Some children ran across the yard, chasing each other and screaming gleefully. Several little girls sat on the steps watching their brothers play, wanting to play with them, but remembering mother's warning to act as little ladies and to be sure not to get their dresses dirty. Underneath the floor several dogs slept peacefully, but at one side two dogs had never met before. Each dog was probably thinking it could whip tarnation out of the other, and they were about to try it, when a well aimed tuft of grass thrown by one of the men separated them.

Inside the church the women were getting the pitch of a hymn. This was a sign for the men to come inside and help sing. One by one, hat in hand, they filed silently through the door. The children, too, went inside to take a seat beside their mothers. I had just lighted a cigarette and wanted to smoke it before I went inside, so the dogs and I were the only ones outside.

I waited until they had sung the first song and then I mounted the steps. Before I could enter, a good sister was called upon to lead the congregation on prayer. Remembering my church manners, I remained outside while the sister prayed.

All heads were bowed, the soft voice of the person praying rose and fell musically. Every now and then I could hear a hearty "Amen" from some devout member. One man was praying his own prayer while the sister was praying, but I was sure God could hear both. A little girl started toward the door, but the watchful mother, head still bowed, grabbed her by the dress tail and fetched her back. One of the dogs, probably a God-fearing dog, walked up and down the aisle, looking at everybody, taking it all in. He reminded me of a Puritan back in the early days of our history who walked up and down the aisle to see if all heads were bowed.

Presently the prayer was ended. The song leader asked for a hymn selection. Someone suggested page 89, and the choir sang "Meet Me There." These people not only sang with their voices but with their hearts as well. I have never heard such beautiful singing. Each person sang his part and all voices blended beautifully into one. The song leader kept time with his cane, thumping it rhythmically against the floor. Each person patted his foot to the music. Even the devout dog, now sitting in the middle of the aisle, scratched his fleas to the time of the music.

Several more songs were sung, then the preacher opened his Bible and began his sermon. He preached with such power and emotion that it made a lump in my throat. He was telling the truth and I knew it; he was warning the congregation of that fateful day when they would be called before God. Where would they be? What would they do? Maybe that was why there was a lump in my throat—I didn't know where I would be or what I would do. I hadn't given it a serious thought before. As he preached, his voice now pleading, now condemning, his eyes dimmed with tears, and his fists thomping down upon his Bible for emphasis, I recalled a little rhyme which fit in so well with the occasion. It was "If you want to be a preacher, don't ever go to school, you won't be a preacher but an educated fool." He preached by his own understanding of the Word and not by what somebody believed. If a person did not like what he said, that person could simply "take it and smoke it in his cob-pipe."

After a while the preacher brought his sermon to a close. An invitation song was sung by the choir. While the invitation was yet in progress an old fashioned hand-shaking was started. Some women got filled with the Spirit or something and started shouting, while we sang and shook hands. I shook hands with the preacher. His hands were not soft and smooth but rough and

calloused. He did not preach for a living; he worked the same as his neighbors. He had a strong grip and I thought he was going to crunch my hand before turning loose to grasp the next person's waiting hand. I shook hands with every person in the church, I reckon, and before it was over my poor hand was almost worn out.

After the hand shaking the choir sang the final song. It was "The Old Country Church." As I left there that day, that song was still ringing in my mind. It fit so perfectly. I left thinking that surely I would return once again to be "with my friends of the old country church."

TO E.J.B.*

Patricia Boone Miller

You walk too much in the wind.
The wind's too free . . . a fool.
Holds up rest, the tranquility of hearth fires,
the balm of conscious silence, common thoughts
with insinuating laughter,
and plagues them to death.
Wind bears a fiend in the subconscious womb;
a dream-Iago, who sucks up the milk of gentle kindness
and turns the mind to struggle on itself.

Come away. your face is white with pain.
Come . . . close the window against the moor and gale.
Tie an apron over your wild, young heart.
Turn your eyes away from the sky into the wall,
for the heather is blowing,
and on the mountain side the pines are sighing,
and your soul is the evening star.

No! You'll not weep. "No coward soul!"
Only a few have the power of choosing.
It is better, let's say, to die undivided,
heart and flash integrated,
than be half-eaten up by the mind.
Further, this is true—
the wind plays a traitor and would have betrayed even **you!**

*Emily Jane Bronte

MY BOY

J. Dallas Miller

He was quite a little boy, not yet two, with eyes, round and silver-blue, like his mother's—and a mound of curls, silk and golden—like no one else's. His body was as supple and sturdy as that of a peasant; a warm body filled and overflowing with a fervor and earnestness for life that was both wonderful and exhausting to behold. In the mornings when I went in to get him up, he would be storming against the sides of his bed like a small jungle cat first caged. Seeing in me an exit from his world, he would center his attention upon my arrival with a countenance full of anxiety, trust, and bliss. Once freed from his captivity and on my lap, he would resume his previous struggling for release, looking for the first opportunity to scramble down and thereby escape the confining procedure of being dressed in shoes and clothes. His one desire—his single purpose—was exploration, and that as quickly as possible. With less than five minutes between him and the bed, with shoes only half buckled and hair still ruffled, he would break through my arms, bound to the doorway; then he would pause a moment, mouth open, body expectant, his eyes searching for last night's discarded teddy bear. Once it was spied, he would dart forward, sometimes to fall flat over too eager feet.

OUTNUMBERED

Dolores Walker

"Richard! Richard!" and then in sheer exasperation "RICHARD!"—Peggy shrieked. Whether it was due to her efforts or the possibility that the effect the numerous slices of peanut butter and jelly he had consumed but two short hours ago were now worn off, the young man in question presently appeared. His abundance of freckles was evident in spite of his cheeks whipped red from running in the cool afternoon air. Her hand moved instinctively over her smooth and shining blonde hair when she viewed his tangled mass of flaming red curls. His still babyish mouth grinned amiably and he galloped into the house before her, unconscious of her dignified disgust at having to seek him.

"Gee whiz, mom, I had so much fun—I wish I had a dog to play with me. Gosh, I'm hungry! Oh boy, lemon pie!"

"Wash for dinner, son," she said, and sighed to think of the towel that would take the heavy dry after his light wash.

"Mother, you know I had to look all over . . ." the rest of her protest was lost to Richard as he bounded up the stairs. He never walked, and whatever gait he chose, his movements could be likened to those of a rotary egg beater. The knees of his pants were not usually worn but rather torn out.

"Gee Whiz" was his only comment when mother sent him up the stairs to wash a second time. He returned and took his place between the two girls. Peggy pecked canary-like at her food. This could have been due to her new diet, which was the rage with the gang, or the chocolate marshmallow special she'd splurged on in the drugstore. Richard's appetite was birdlike also, but more like that of a vulture. Dark-headed Kathy, a mature seventeen, sat on his left. She had a new heart-throb this week but nothing curved her healthy appetite either. The three children presented quite a contrast and Dad called them the Rainbow Division, though mother reflected realistically, they might better be known as the Fighting 69th. That reminded her and she said to Dad, "Frank, you'll have to speak to Richard about fighting . . . Mrs. Nelson called me again today." There were two Nelson boys and their strategy was to grab Richard by his arms and pull him down. Once he was on the ground the rest was easy. When Dad finally became aware of what was going on, he promised Richard a whipping every time the Nelson boys gave him one. Then one day he'd come out on the porch just in time to see Richard running from the boys. When he looked up he gave Dad an inquisitive half smile and spinning around surprised the Nelsons with a good punch apiece. Since then Richard the Lion-Hearted and the Nelsons played together with the usual occasional exchange of punches. But Mrs. Nelson was always calling Mother. Yes, Dad was pacifying Mother, he would speak to Richard later.

"I have a date tonight, Mother," announced Kathy.

"I like Jim better than Bob. He has a car and he gave me a baseball cap too," offered Richard. It was his first contribution to the dinner table conversation and would have been better left unsaid.

"I do wish you'd stop him from saying those things to Bob, mother. He'll have an old maid for a sister! Besides, he always drags out his baseball junk, too."

Mother looked at the culprit who smiled over his second piece of lemon pie. "Well, dear," Mother comforted, "he's proud of his glove because he earned the money cutting grass. As for those remarks, why the boys know he's only a child." Father said nothing—he knew mother liked Jim better too.

After dinner, Mother went next door for a fitting and Dad settled down with the paper before venturing out for his Friday-night poker party. It was Peggy and Richard's time to do the dishes. It was the one thing they hated. Daddy said the girls of course should be expected to help in the house but he held the opinion shared by his son—dishes were an undignified occupation not at all becoming a man. There were three women in the house, though, and consequently Richard dried dishes! He had acquired the habit, along with the dish drying, of going upstairs to wash his hands and forgetting to

come down. Peggy, perplexed with him because she wanted to get through and call Sally, started after him. Suddenly she heard a scream. When she reached the bedroom, Richard was lying on the floor, playing contentedly with his cars. The scream had ensued on his instigating a wreck. He continued playing, unconscious of her presence.

Peggy was going to scold him for neglecting his job, but she smiled to herself and turned quietly to go back downstairs. On her way to the kitchen to finish the dishes, she stopped a moment to query, "Daddy, why don't we get a dog?"

IN THE MAKING

Victor Venetozzi

They are at it again tonight. I guess it will be another one of those separations. She'll come back, she always does after she's had enough of a loose time. The old man will probably go out and get soused again tonight.

You can see the house from here. Wrong end of town, porch sagging, broken windows and not a bit of smoke coming from the chimney. The coal ran out today, hope the relief agency sends a load out tomorrow or we will freeze to death. What a dump this neighborhood is. Dirty, crummy street. The clean-up crews don't even bother coming through here. What's the use, it would be just as filthy five minutes after they left. They use the street instead of garbage cans on this side of town.

Sure is cold tonight, wish this coat wasn't so thin. It belonged to my brother before he grew out of it. There isn't any use in asking for a new one. What would they use for money, there wasn't enough to eat tonight? There goes Maggie out again. She's probably going to look for some kind-hearted guy to buy her a square meal. Can't blame her much; her family is worse off than mine.

What to do, where to go? It's the same old story; no money for a movie, not even a nickel for a bar of candy. Could go to the dance at the Youth Center? Who would dance with me with these baggy pants and ripped shirt? Wonder what it feels like to have a real haircut instead of these home-jobs the old man gives me? May as well go over to the poolroom; there may be an interesting game going on. Even if there isn't, it's at least warm in there.

These shoes are mighty thin. It was nice of Joe to give them to me even if they are practically worn through. Oh well, I guess it's better than walking barefoot.

There's the shack Jake is living in. The relief doctor told him he needed an operation and good food. What with—his looks? That guy has never once broken the law. He's a peace-loving, God-fearing man and what's it got him? A miserable shack, not enough to eat, and his only friends as bad off as he is. Sure, they can say they're sorry but it won't put food in his belly and neither will it do away with his need for an operation. He won't live much longer but he's better off dead. Honesty? He's honest. That guy wouldn't even cash the last check the relief agency sent him because it was a buck more than he usually gets. Seven lousy bucks to get along on for two weeks. He wants to go to work, but who would hire a guy that can only stand on his feet three hours a day?

I'd better cross the street, here comes that big flat-foot again. Had enough of that leather handle on the end of his billy-club. One of these days—boy! one of these days my chance will come to even things up. Filthy son-of-a-no-good he calls me. What would a prison sentence be compared to the pleasure of sending him to a hospital for six months? A guy just can't get along with that bully no matter how hard he tries. One of these days—.

Church—it's been a long time since I went to church. Reverend Denny is a good guy, too. He really tries to be friendly and means it. Come to church, Nick; trust in God, Nick; things will be better pretty soon, Nick. He sort of gets under my skin with his preaching to me. Go to church—sure. With these lousy clothes, not a cent for the collection plate, sitting there while everybody looks at you as if you were a freak? Trust in God—sure, trust in God. I used to say my prayers every night. Let me grow up to be a

good boy, I would pray. Let my mother quit running around and get along better with my father. Let my father quit drinking and help him to find a steady job. Trust in God? How can you trust in God when your belly is screaming for food and the cramps have you doubled over with pain? Sure, things will be better—how can they get any worse than they are right now?

Boy! look at that mansion. That's where Lucky Dan lives. The horses and the numbers racket really pay off. No broken windows in that house. He has company again. Those big-time politicians know where to go when they want real food and good whiskey. Can't blame Dan; he feeds them once in awhile and then slips them something so that they keep the law off his toes. He can afford to buy protection with the haul he's making. Twenty rooms and a three-car garage—loaded with the best that money can buy. What a beautiful life he's leading. No worn-out shoes for that boy. He's a right guy, too. Many a buck he's handed me for a square meal. There's the kind of a guy to have for a father. So he's making his against the law. The law—what a laugh!

Good old poolroom. Wonder what I would do if I didn't have this place to come to? John is okay, he'll let you loaf in here as long as you like. Keeps them off the streets he says. He could keep this place cleaner though; it smells like a rat hole. So what? At least the place is warm. There's Andy over there. He must have rolled another drunk; those are new clothes he's wearing. Lucky, that guy, he never gets caught. Never worked a day in his life but he's never broke.

It's getting late. May as well head for home—if it can be called home. I don't remember how long it's been since the sheets were changed on that bed. The lumps in that mattress just keep getting worse. Since there hasn't been any heat in the house all day, maybe the bed-bugs have frozen to death and I'll be able to get some sleep.

I hope the old man doesn't come home in one of his moods. Why that jerk gets such a kick out of beating me I'll never understand. My day will come. My day will come, and if I can stay alive I'll grow up and before I leave for good, I'm going to make him eat that strap.

Lucky's pals must have left, the house is all dark. It sure looks cozy from here. Yep, there goes the maid. Tomorrow he will be back pulling in the chips. More power to you, Dan. Maybe when I am old enough you will have a place for me in your outfit.

The Rev. is saying his evening prayers. Go to it, old boy, and if you say a prayer for me, make it a thick steak. That's what I want more than anything else right now.

Sleep well, Jake. I don't believe in miracles, but if there is any such thing, I hope one happens to you.

What a dump! If the roof on this joint doesn't get fixed pretty soon, the little bit of plaster that is left will fall down. These steps could stand some fixing—better as they are, though; maybe the old man will trip and break his neck.

Hello, Maggie, have a hard night?

TOWNSEND ROOM

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FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, take pride in presenting this, our eighteenth volume, which will be in two issues.

SERVE

H. Edward Richardson

**Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical
shuttle . . .**

A reminiscence sing.

—Walt Whitman

One time, in late autumn, Jeffrey passed the place of the tennis courts and looked at them in the splendid sun. The one to the south was lower; together they looked like two slight steps built for a spoiled giantess. Behind the courts stood the aged brick solemnity of Requiem Hall, where Jeffrey paused, with Requiem Hall to his left and slightly in front, and looked at a downward angle toward the tennis courts to the south. The splendid sun, commingled with his own loneliness and the recurring human desire to dream over the old faces and places in an ancientness, urged the constantly pealing drums of infinite time, mounting, militantly sonorous, until they concussed away the muddled days of a decade.

He recalled them then: the young men and girls there before the war, standing flocculent about the courts with an undaunted insouciance and self-assurance that young people glow in for a while before laying aside; how they would stand up on the smooth-worn bank above the upper court, making minute dust clouds with the scuffing of their sneakers, not conscious of their movement, facing the hot west sun in late spring and summer and fall; the casualness of their comfort—the girls lounging in lazy lure on the grassy spots of the bank, absorbing their bit of sun—a boy leaning on a racket, another foot-writing in the dust, another standing with his weight on one leg and the other leg bent in an attitude of rest; and those bouncing the white, car-stripped balls on the taut, vari-colored checks of catgut.

It was a carefree spot in Philosophy Hall, where those young seemed set off in a princely atmosphere of their own, without any knowledge of the great burden which was to be borne down so destructively upon them. Sweating, bronzed, lithe, they leaped over the lined courts absorbed in games now forgotten. One could lie in warm lassitude in the shade on the south side of the lower court, and doze from the soporific monotony of tennis shoes over the asphalt. Occasionally, a bright car would circle the seldom-traveled back drive, which formed a surcingle about the southern and eastern portions of the campus and came out in a westerly direction by the lower court; sometimes the car would be a convertible, filled with students evincing an anchorless freedom, laughing, waving, shouting, their hair wildly wind-whipped.

Across the macadam width of Richmond Avenue, rose in immaculate neatness the sharp-sloping blue roof of the Kingsley Service Station. Behind the gas tanks, by the square glass of show window, was a dark red water fountain, shaded by the short eave of the building which faced the courts across the street. Between sets, the youths would rush for the fountain, sweating and thirsty, in a healthy, momentary exhaustion; if they did not run, they would walk nimbly across the street in icon outline on the black asphalt, their white sports clothes standing out brilliantly in the sun; sometimes there would be anxiety in their talk and movement, an unworried anxiety, all greatly restrained—perhaps more of promise than anxiety, but at length powerful, and longing for expression.

Sometimes they would wait quietly after reaching the fountain, and each would drink slowly, letting the lines in his face relax as the cool kiss of liquifaction parted his lips and floated with steady pressure down his throat. Some, after drinking, would exhale and breathe heavily, straightening up after spinning a half-circle with their bodies away from the fountain, letting the next take his turn. Some would shower their faces, and the sun would then illumine the admixture of water and sweat drops. They would race, or walk effortlessly back across Richmond Avenue, bouncing or skipping as they came closer to the courts.

But, of course, this picture could not be real, Jeffrey thought suddenly,

standing in the late autumn day, watching the sun reflecting brightly from the silver-fenced back-guards. The imagination plays tricks, and when we dream or remember, we glorify.

But he knew some of the faces had been real ten years ago, and that they were gone now. He stood, gazing at the whole place intently. Across the street some strange garagemen were working clamorously on a car. From the west, it being late, the sun lowered and glimmered a little. A cool wind swept in, running its fingerless and invisible hand across the courts, brushing away nothing, for the courts were empty and very clean.

REQUIESCAT

Shirley Spire

Come to my funeral; gather round;
Celebrate sticking me in the ground;
Gape at me—murmur something profound
With sugary breath.

Sing at my funeral, if you must;
Sing as they cover me with the dust;
Sing of my life, my love or lust
But not of my death.

Send me some flowers when I'm dead;
(Or buy you a fifth of Scotch instead)
Flowers of purple, orange or red,
But please don't send white.

And after I'm at last reposed,
I'd rather not have myself exposed;
See that they keep the casket closed
To spare them the sight.

THE VOLUNTEER

Robert N. Grise

The Lord upon the clouds did write;
He wrote for all to see:
"Who will love and serve," He wrote,
"And give his life for me?"

Those words He wrote upon the clouds
Did glory to the sky impart,
And while some men passed them by,
They weighed upon my heart.

And then with firm conviction
I raised my voice to say,
"I will serve and give my life
In love for Thee this day."

RESIGNATION

Shirley Spire

Some men go for low-necked dresses,
Painted lips and platinum tresses.
Some men go for violet eyes—
Slinky shapes without disguise.
And as I none of these possess,
I'll never have some men, I guess.

RADIOOPERATOR

Joe Kelly Smith

The other night at 8:30, just as I started to turn on the big ball game, my wife came in the living room, where we (her father, our two children, Jane and Bill, and I) were sitting around the radio, and announced, "Oh, I'm glad you have all heard the programs you wanted to hear. It's just time for the Baptist Hour and Brother Brown is going to speak.

"But, Mom," protested Jane, "the program our home ec teacher told us to listen to comes on at 8:30. They are going to give directions on how to make an angel food cake. I just have to hear it."

"Not on your life!" chimed in Bill. "The best murder mystery on the radio starts at half past eight. I haven't missed it for eleven weeks, and I don't intend to start now."

"And just when I wanted to hear the 8:30 news!" broke in Grandpa.

Here I had thought I could listen to the ball game in peace. I tried to think of how we could strike up a compromise. There was only one radio in the house. Finally a brilliant idea struck me. It was a push-button radio.

"We'll all get what we want," I said as I pulled my chair up closer so that I could push the buttons. "I know no one wants to give in so we'll just hear some of each of the programs."

That didn't exactly seem to suit, but finally everyone agreed. Here is what we heard:

"The lineups for tonight's game: For the Dodgers; Reese, shortstop; Robinson, second base; and catching tonight is . . . General MacArthur who only last week . . . held up the First National Bank, the Ace Loan Company, and . . . tried Our Best Flour in only two cakes and here's what she has to say . . . Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every . . . throw the ball to center field . . . and then all a pinch of salt . . . President Truman reported to Congress today that . . . The wages of sin is death but . . . he reportedly used a blow torch on the safe after trying to work the combination. All the work was in vain, though, because all he got was . . . an appointment as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. His only comment on accepting the appointment was . . . That Roberts sure is pitching a dandy game tonight. There is a good crowd here, too. Looking around awhile ago I saw . . . Simon Peter, who also bringeth his brother . . . All right, Pete, let's get out of here. Something tells me that . . . if you want a lemon icing on it you should . . . bounce to the pitcher . . . Truman also announced that his daughter Margaret was going to sing at . . . the state penitentiary for twenty years after which . . . two men looked out from behind prison bars. One saw mud; the other saw . . . Hank Thompson hit a home run over . . . two eggs . . . who were racing down Main Street trying to catch . . . the president's yacht which . . . staggered up to a patrolman and blurted out . . . the other scores are Pittsburgh 4, Cincinnati 2; St. Louis 1, Chicago 0 . . . Pour the batter into a shallow pan and bake until . . . the Lord shall come again . . . Here is some late news from Korea . . . the Reds scored two runs in the seventh and one in the eighth and now lead the Pirates, 5 to 4. Home runs were hit by . . . Senator Taft, who, in an address at Cleveland, Ohio, today said . . . Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? . . . It's because I love you. Now you stay here while I go to . . . Brooklyn in the midst of the eighth . . . And if you want further proof that crime does not pay, let me cite you the case of Bob Ford who . . . was out trying to steal second base . . . Be sure not to slam the oven door because if you do your cake might look like . . . the Dean of Men at Columbia University who today reported to the committee that . . . Umpire Dascoli just sent Leo Durocher to the showers in the game between the Giants and the Braves for arguing about . . . whether or not to use Our Best Flour . . . At this point I happened to look up and saw from the expressions on the faces of the listeners that no one seemed to be getting much out of his favorite program, so I turned the radio off.

MAMA AND THE KITTENS

George Varden

We didn't know about the kittens until after Mama's funeral. Mama had always said that she wanted her ashes thrown into the Gulf Stream off the Florida Keys. It had been there that she had met Papa, and she said it was the real beginning of her life and she wanted it to be her final resting place. Mama had gone to the Keys with Aunt Nora in August, 1913, two months after Uncle Chester died. Aunt Nora realized that her husband's legacy would not last too long, but she did not want to remarry without Uncle Chester's permission. She had heard of an outstanding medium called Felixo who was practicing at Key West at that time; so, with the money Uncle Chester had left her, Aunt Nora went to Florida to consult her late husband on the advisability of taking another husband, and she took Mama, who was barely twenty-one, to lend her moral support.

As soon as their train pulled into Key West, Aunt Nora arranged a seance for the next afternoon with Felixo. When they were received into the medium's house, they were surprised by his appearance. Mama had told me she expected to see a wizened old man, but Felixo was young and respectable-looking like a preacher just out of divinity school. He led Mama and Aunt Nora into his study and had them form a sort of a circle with him. Then he completely darkened the room and asked them to join him in the singing of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" to give more power to whatever spirits might be near. He slipped into a light trance to summon up Uncle Chester, and Felixo had Uncle Chester's shade almost completely materialized when Aunt Nora's loud sobs brought him out of the trance. Aunt Nora had reached over to comment to Mama on how lifelike Uncle Chester looked, and Mama had not replied but lay limply in her chair and breathed heavily. Felixo was not alarmed but he was deeply impressed by Mama's natural trance. He brought Mama out of it slowly and saw her and Aunt Nora to their hotel. Before two weeks had passed Mama and Felixo were married.

Mama and Papa lived in Key West for about five years. A local committee for civic righteousness and a coalition of church leaders demanded that they either stop their hymn singing in seances or leave town. Since Papa couldn't raise the power he needed without his hymns, he and Mama came here to live with her relatives. Mama made Papa give up his practice because she didn't want him to get into any more trouble with the authorities. So Papa dropped his business name which he had taken because his own name Gregory did not lend the proper atmosphere for a medium and took up farming. Here we lived until Mama died.

Mama had been sick for a long time, and we were somewhat prepared for her death. Nevertheless, the next two days were hectic. I telegraphed Aunt Nora to come up for the services, and I told her we would stay with her a few days. I arranged for Mama's cremation. Papa didn't like the idea too well, but since it had been Mama's wish, he complied with it as well as he could. I hired old Mrs. Elmand to take care of the house while we were gone and to be our housekeeper when we got back.

Aunt Nora came up for the funeral, and she and Papa and I took Mama's ashes to the Keys and strewed them onto the Gulf Stream. We stopped over and visited Aunt Nora and her husband for a few days so that Papa could regain some of his old strength. Coming back on the train, Papa told me again how he had met Mama and of her last words. Mama had been sick with cancer of the breast and she knew her time was about up. One night, she reached over to Papa, who was sitting up with her, and told him, "Gregory, the grave is not the end; death cannot part us. I'll not leave this life until you do. We'll go to the great beyond together." The next morning Papa woke up in his chair beside the bed to find her dead.

The Friday after we got back, Mrs. Elmand told me about the kittens. Our black cat Cartheuser (Mama always named our cats for famous mediums) had had a litter of kittens in the barn the day Mama died. Papa had told Mrs. Elmand to have them drowned as soon as they were born, but she

had been so taken by one of them that she wouldn't let the hired man kill it. It was creamy white in contrast to Cartheuser and all of her other kittens. I told Mrs. Elmand that it would be all right and for her not to worry Papa about it now.

Two months to the day that Mama had passed away, Papa held a seance in the parlor. Mrs. Elmand, Papa, and I formed the circle and sang "Faith of Our Fathers," "Rock of Ages," and "In the Garden." Papa tried in vain to contact Mama. Things had been going very well and we had just begun to hear a rapping when Mrs. Elmand screamed. I turned on the lights and found that the creamy white kitten had rubbed against her legs. The kitten sidled over to Papa and crawled into his lap and purred itself to sleep. Mama, and Papa especially, had never allowed the cats to come up to the house from the barn, but Papa took a liking to this kitten right away, although he never could think of a name for it. It never left the house again. It'd stay in the kitchen during the day, but after supper and on Sundays it sat on the front porch. At night, it crawled onto the bed where Papa slept. Mrs. Elmand regretted ever having saved the kitten's life. She had to give it food straight from the table. The kitten wouldn't eat table scraps or catch mice. Mrs. Elmand said that Papa had just plain spoiled it.

Papa tried more seances, but they produced no results other than leaving him more tired than before. He finally decided to try slate writing. He put a piece of chalk between two old-fashioned slates and bound them together. He put them on top of the kitchen table and he and I held them down firmly. We heard the scratch of the chalk writing on the slate and felt its vibrations all the way up to our shoulders, but when we opened them, all that was written was a scrawl which I finally made out to be *m e o w*. I realized then why we hadn't been able to make contact with and materialize Mama. Papa didn't say anything, but I knew that he, too, understood what the spirits were trying to tell us. After that he didn't try to get en rapport with Mama's spirit anymore. He just sat around the house, half in a daze, with the kitten in his lap and a smile on his face.

Then one afternoon I found him sitting alone in his chair. The kitten was nowhere around. I went to wake him so he could take his medicine but he was dead. I called the doctor and the undertaker and they came and took Papa into town. I went out on the back porch to try to find myself, and, in the half light of the day and night, I saw the kitten down by the barn curled up in a ball near Cartheuser.

DEFLATION OF AN EGO

Shirley Spires

Did you think I was to love you
Till my body blends with dust
And my every thought be of you—
What an egotist you must
Be to assume I'd not forget you
For a never-ending while!
Did you preen to think I'd let you
Hold me captive to your smile?
Did you visualize me shattered
By the absence of your Kiss?
For a time, I grant, it mattered;
But the point I make is this—
If you'll pardon my intrusion
In your misdirected mind—
Best you part with the illusion
That the adage "love is blind"
Is a truth with no exception
For my love has learned to see.
As for you—has your perception
Ever chanced to fall on me?

THE RAIN

Robert N. Grise

"It doesn't look like rain," he said
As he lingered at the door.
"Better take your raincoat, anyway,"
She said. "It rained on you before."

"Nonsense," he exclaimed,
"Not a cloud in the sky.
I won't wear my raincoat."
And he slipped out rather sly.

"What a beautiful day," he said
As he tramped along the walk;
"All this about the rain
Is only foolish talk."

Now Mr. Jones he did meet
While on his balmy way;
"Looks like rain," said Mr. Jones;
"Should have worn your coat today."

"Of course not," he replied,
"The sky's as blue as it can be;
I will not wear my raincoat,
And not a drop will fall on me."

He continued on his journey
To the office and his work.
"Carry an old raincoat!" he scoffed.
"Why, they would take him for a jerk!"

He tipped his hat to Mrs. Smith
And smiled at Mrs. Brown;
It was sure to rain, they said,
"Before you get to town."

He quietly held all comment,
But continued on his way.
It seemed "going to rain"
Was all that people had to say.

He was so sure it would not rain
He did not see the sky,
And all those dark black clouds
Did not even catch his eye.

Then, it seemed the clouds could hold no more,
And with a roll of thunder they gave way,
And it really rained an awful flood
On his bright and sunny day.

And now where'er he thinks of it,
His mind is racked with pain.
Oh, if he had only had his raincoat
The day he got caught out in the rain.

AUNT JENSIE'S BATHTUB

Robert N. Grise

Aunt Jensie wanted a bathtub. She said she had always wanted one. No one else on the whole Coon Range had such a thing in their house, but she wanted one anyway. Daddy and the boys just laughed at her, but Mother said that Aunt Jensie was a right deserving woman, and she's worked hard all her life and she ought to have something fancy around the place.

When she first told Uncle Bill, he just laughed out big the way he always does, but when he saw that she was set on having a bathtub, he got sort of mad.

"A bathtub!" he yelled. "Where in tarnation did you get such a dern fool notion?"

"City folks has 'em," Aunt Jensie said with determination, "and I reckon I can have one too if I want it."

"Why, you don't need no bathtub," he said as he wiped his mouth with his sleeve. "You don't need no bathtub. Why, you'd have me toting water for you every week. If you got to splash water, go down and set in the creek—that is, if you think you won't scare the hogs."

That didn't set right with Aunt Jensie, and Uncle Bill could see it. He took a deep breath and said, "And what are you going to pay for it with?"

"I've saved four dollars and thirty cents egg money," she shot back at him. "And you're going to sell the calf when it comes."

"Sell my calf!" he yelled. "I'm going to keep my calf till fall. Where do you think we're going to get our winter money?"

"If you'd get out there in that tobacco patch and make a crop, we'd have some money next winter," Aunt Jensie fired right back at him.

He didn't have an answer to that and she knew it. His face got all red and he stomped out and slammed the screen door hard. He started off to the barn to have a look at the cow. He was madder than a wet hen, but he was licked and he knew it. She knew it too; she was going to have that bathtub.

The next day Mother helped Aunt Jensie fix up an order for the tub (Aunt Jensie don't write so good). She was getting it from a big store in Bowling Green. It cost twenty-four dollars and something, and the catalog said they would send it down on the train. Uncle Bill would have to get somebody to go in to Lewisburg after it. Mother said twenty-four dollars was a right nice price for a bathtub, but still, that's a pretty lot in these parts.

There was a picture of the tub in the catalog that Aunt Jensie showed around to everybody. It sure was pretty. It was setting up on four little legs made out like they was lion's paws or something, and there was holes in the front end to stick pipes through, but that was just for city folks, they said. It was all white inside, and at the top the sides were all flared out so you wouldn't hurt yourself getting in and out, and I guess so you could set on the side and wash your feet if you didn't want to get nothing else wet. Aunt Jensie was sending four dollars of egg money for a down payment. She said that she could pay them the rest when the calf came.

About two weeks later Aunt Jensie came over with a letter for Mother to read to her. She don't get letters very often 'cause don't nobody have nothing to write to her about. She was all hepped up about it; said she just knowed it was from the bathtub people. Anyway, it was a big letter with the store name spelled in big fancy writing across the top, and it even had a picture of the store building in one corner. Aunt Jensie 'lowed it was right nice of them to send their picture.

Mother read the letter and it said thank you very much for your order, and, yes, it was all right to pay them off when the calf came, and that the tub would be sent down to Lewisburg on Tuesday's train.

Aunt Jensie was just tickled pink and Mother said she was happy for her and only wished we could afford one too. She knowed Daddy wouldn't never hear of such a thing. Aunt Jensie said Mother could come over just anytime and take a real bath in her tub. I could just see her setting there in that big shiny white thing, soaking herself in a heap of water and soapsuds.

She said she was going to get Ben to bring up a barrel from the store so she could have two rain barrels. That way a fella wouldn't have to carry water clear up from the creek.

Well, sir, Tuesday came around and Uncle Bill got Ben to take him in to Lewisburg in his truck to get the tub. Ben waited for him over at our place, 'cause, you know, there ain't any road up to Uncle Bill's. Mr. John and Lester came along too; said they didn't know how heavy the thing might be; thought they would just come along for the ride, anyway.

Uncle Bill had spent most of the last few days messing around the barn, kinda fixing up and getting ready for the calf. He believed it would be a big strong one, but he didn't talk much about it 'cause he knew he couldn't keep it.

Uncle Bill came down about 7:30. He looked tired and kinda worn out as he walked up to the men in the yard. They stood there talking for a while, and as they walked over to the truck he said, "It'll be the biggest, strongest calf in these parts." But he wasn't smiling; you could tell he wasn't happy.

Mother 'lowed as how Aunt Jensie would be over about the middle of the morning. Sure enough, she came ambling down the path about 10:30. Said she had cleaned up a little around the place, but she was just too nervous and excited to stay around by herself.

By the time dinner was ready, Mrs. Gilliam and Lester's wife, Annie, came over. They said Aunt Bessie and little Beverly and the twins were aiming to come over sometime in the afternoon. After dinner Annie and Aunt Jensie went back up to the barn to see how the cow was. Everybody else helped clean up the dinner dishes and then set around and talked for a spell. Mrs. Gilliam was telling some big tale about city folks or something when we heard Annie yelling to Aunt Bessie and the kids down the road. They all got to the yard about the same time, so everybody else come out and sorta stood around and talked, mostly just waiting for the men folks.

Mrs. Gilliam was the first to hear the truck coming up the hill. "I hear it!" she yelled, sounding all excited. And sure enough, in a minute there came the truck over the hill and down around the bend. It came on up the road slow-like, then swung to the left and started up the driveway. You could make out three in the cab, and there in the back setting a'straddle of a big long box with his arms folded, was Uncle Bill.

When the truck pulled up and stopped, everybody crowded around to get a good look. I bet it looked just like a Saturday night crowd at the ten-cent store at Russellville. Anyway, Uncle Bill said, "Now you-all just stand back and let me off. You-all can see this thing up at the house."

Daddy quit work and came in about this time, and they all helped carry the big box up the path. Mr. John and Daddy were lifting on one side, and Lester and Ben were on the other, and Uncle Bill had a hold of the back end. Little Beverly and the twins ran on ahead and all the rest of the folks followed behind.

"Billy sure looked like the devil riding a casket," Aunt Bessie said real loud, and they all laughed and hollered at him.

"Well, I felt just like I was in a funeral procession!" Annie laughed.

"Me too," Uncle Bill muttered with his mouth in a hard straight line, but none of the women folks heard him.

They finally got the tub into the house and set down in the kitchen. Lester and Ben worked around and tried to get the top of the box off while Aunt Jensie kept trying to hurry them up. She just about had a spell before they could get that tub out, and I think Annie and Aunt Bessie were just about as worked up as she was. Lester and Ben gave a big yank and there the bathtub was, setting there even prettier than the picture in the catalog. It was just as white and shiny, and, man! it was big enough to hold Sally Francis! Everybody just stood there saying, "Ain't it pretty!"

They set it out in its place on the back porch and Ben fixed up the hole in the bottom so you could pull the little stopper and let the water run out. After everybody had felt of it and looked at it for a spell, Aunt Jensie said,

"Ben, you and Lester fetch me some water; and all you women folks clear out of here. I'm going to try this thing out!"

Uncle Bill stuck his head in the door. "Got our bathtub fixed up yet?" There was a big grin on his face. "I'm aiming to take a bath in it tonight." Aunt Jencie eyed him cautious like, then asked, "How are things out at the barn?"

"Jest fine, Jencie," he said. "We got **twin** calves."

THE DEATH OF A SCHOOL

Wanda Smyth

Most of the citizens of the Bend cannot believe that the school is closed this year. The white frame building has withstood too many changes in design, teachers, and generations. For the term of its existence, it was the center of social, educational, and spiritual life for the tiny community, so secluded in the Kentucky foothills. Here have been born the dreams and ambitions of many of its pupils.

This autumn, however, the one-room building is withering even as the leaves of the big oaks that surround it. The paint is peeling, and some of the carefully cut names on the sides and back of the building can no longer be read. Two windows are broken, and all the guards are gone. Such a thing never happened before. In fact, the Bend was always very proud of its rural school.

The younger children cannot remember the "good old days" of which our grandparents speak, because even in our day the school as the social life of the community was slowly dying.

One of the stories which Grandma Smyth tells about is the Sunday school. Everyone—absolutely everyone—went. Mothers hurried through dinner and made sure that each child was washed behind his ears. Then donning their Sunday bonnets, off they went with their families to Sunday school. In those days, people from College Hill rode over on horseback or in their buggies to attend the Bend Sunday School. "Religion was real and very alive in those days," says Mrs. Smyth.

I suppose that Grandma Smyth is the Bend's best qualified citizen to tell about life as it used to be there because she is the community's oldest resident. When she came to the Bend near the turn of the century, it was one of the most flourishing communities in the foothills. At that time the Kentucky River, which surrounds the Bend on three sides, was the most important means of transportation. Therefore a farm on the river was desirable, and people were interested in building lasting homes in the Bend.

The attendance at school in the earlier days was high. It is unbelievable that fifty children could be crowded into the one room. The cistern had not been put in then, and the pupils took turns carrying water from the Beech Spring—so named because it sprang from what seemed to be the very roots of a beech tree—in a big five-gallon bucket. One dipper served all of them.

The school had its own activities then as the larger schools now do. The excitement of marble games and baseball in the spring would parallel that of our tournaments today in the consolidated schools.

Through the years, the annual Christmas play was an event to which everyone looked forward with anticipation. Every student had a part. If he couldn't be in a one-act play, he at least had a short recitation. Carols were sung by everyone after the performance was over. The joy and happiness in the hearts burned as brightly as the candles on the six-foot tree that stood in the front of the room directly under George Washington's picture.

The Christmas cards that the children exchanged were all made by them. Of course, some of the cards did not remind one of Christmas at all—some that are in my scrapbook are truly freaks—but they all came from the heart.

As I look back over the eight years I attended the Bend School, I remember many things. I remember soft autumn days and a playhouse by the

line fence. Even now there are broken pieces of glass, a stub of a broom, and stones that show that we once had a playhouse there.

I remember the first snows and coasting down an icy hill on a home-made sled. There were frosty mornings when we held out numb fingers and toes to a pot-bellied stove, red with heat around its middle. The remote corners of the room would insist on retaining an icy atmosphere, and so it was not unusual to have all of our first classes around the stove.

I find in my memory book, too, pictures of grey, muddy winter days when it was too bad to play outside. Some of us would play on a victrola that had to be cranked the six records that the school owned.

At the Bend School, I lived through my first big love affair and received my first kiss, all in the seventh grade. My name is one of those that are fading from the decaying walls of the building.

I remember dreams, hopes, and fears that I shared with friends at the Bend School. We knew (or thought we knew) exactly what we wanted our future to be. Our vocations were all planned; some had planned even the steps for carrying out their hopes. It doesn't matter that these dreams are forgotten and are now replaced by more practical ones. We had learned the importance of dreaming and making plans—that is what we remember now. By sharing disappointments as well as hopes, we learned, too, the basis for friendship.

I know that there are many advantages to be gained from consolidation. The Bend School is outdated and has been living on borrowed time for many years. The long yellow school bus that carried the few remaining pupils out of the Bend takes them to new and splendid opportunities.

But I wonder if the branches of the trees as they swing back and forth in the north wind do not wipe tears from the windows of the white frame schoolhouse on the hill.

ACT II—SAME SCENE

Vic. Venettozzi

The triple row of ribbons on the marine's tunic was hidden from view by the woman in his arms. Overseas bars and service stripes were visible on his left sleeve. This was goodbye—the goodbye this couple had said once before. They had believed that the goodbye of seven years ago would be the last of this type, but here they were again.

There were no tears, no patriotic speeches and waving flags. The only sounds were those always heard on any bustling station platform. The conductor bellowed his impersonal "All aboard," causing the woman to stiffen momentarily at the sound.

The marine slowly released himself from the woman who had spent the greater part of her marriage waiting for him. He gently brushed her cheek with his hand and then turned and hastily climbed the steps of the passenger coach.

She stood erect and silent while the last minute preparations for departure were being made. The marine appeared at the window nearest to her, and she raised her face towards her husband, her future, the father of the children they had not had time to have.

The strength to carry on which she had felt the first time he left to fight a war across the seas was not with her. The determination at that time had come from a conviction that he was leaving her to do his share for a just cause. Half her heart was being torn from her again and she refused to understand the necessity.

The train began its slow movement out of the station. He waved to her and she half-raised her arm in answer. Dry-eyed, she watched the train until it was out of sight. Once more she would experience those long days and endless nights, the terrible worry, the constant heartache. Worst of all, she would hear within her that nagging, nagging word over and over and over—Why? Why? Why?

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FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, take pride in presenting this, our eighteenth volume, second number.

WINDS

JANE MOBERLY

A gentle wind is good; but so polite
he only waves my hair with quiet caress
and never much disturbs my shoulders' set
or even steps. The gentle wind will trickle
across my eyelids, resting only lightly there;
then whispering away.
I often miss a gentle wind when it has gone,
but not for very long.

I love a strong wind—that gives no quarter
as he picks my hair off my neck
and tosses it, and scrapes my legs,
and, chuckling, scorches my face—
all with one breath. The strong wind lifts me high
and whips me around, laughing aloud to think that he has won
and that tomorrow, or some stiller, softer day,
when I look for him—or call to him—
watching, with amusement from his hidden everywhere,
he will pretend he is not there.

You never asked, but still I promise you
It cannot be soon when I forget.
A gentle memory is hard enough to spare
And you are scarcely that.

CRITICISM

GWEN JONES

I do not think to criticize
Will make a poet "good" or "wise."
Your stanzas had much more appeal,
The words to me were far more real
Before your thoughts were his to steal.
The critic makes your poems "fine,"
But nevermore will they be thine.

SONNET

LORRAINE McGLONE

Perhaps I'll love you better in a while . . .
But now, please let me rest and try to think.
Do not probe me, for I am on the brink
Of a final abyss and if riled
Will plunge into its depths without a care.
Don't try to understand or long to see.
Simply know that alone, for now I'll fare
Very well; no hope can now be phrased . . .
That I want to hear or that you may sing;
No passion that can be reborn or raised,
For ardour is a past, forgotten thing.
Love—a vignette at the close of your days
With me will fade and be but a happening.

THE PICTURE

WANDA SMYTH

A light touch of white against a background of palest blue; a fairy spray of delicate pink which increases in density until it becomes crimson and then fades again into the blue, this time of a slightly darker shade. Now more white gently woven into the blue. Here a dash of brilliant green contrasting with the dull brown. A pause—during which a long, critical look is passed over the scene.

Then a dash of gold blends into the crimson.

A few more colors find their way into the finishing touches and the fantasy in watercolor is finished. . . . The girl looked up then and found that I had been watching her.

"It's not much of a picture," she smiled, as if in apology.

I was silent for a moment as I looked critically at her creation. If I got several yards away from this mass of watercolors, I had to admit they took form as a colorful sunset blending into sky and sea. Tropical palms wavered in a faint breeze along the shore of this South Sea island.

As I knew practically nothing of art, I certainly couldn't judge the worth of the picture, but I smiled reassuringly and said, "It's very pretty. Are you going to frame it?"

I looked then at the wall opposite where hung a large picture of a destroyer, *U. S. S. Jenkins*, and a bulletin board on which were several pictures of ships and sailors clipped from magazines.

Looking again at the girl, I found her eyes were on an 8 x 10 picture on her desk. The object of her gaze was a boy in uniform, a boy with laughing brown eyes and a big smile. This sailor was on a destroyer near an island very much like the one she had attempted to paint.

I wondered if she knew why she had tried to paint a picture of a tropical island. I thought that I knew. On her face was an expression of wistful longing. Suddenly, I realized what intense loneliness and yearning she had been enduring for months and the culmination of longing was in the fantasy.

The island picture *was* truly a fantasy. It lacked a quality of reality and fairly shouted that its creator had never seen an island such as she had meant to portray.

Her life, as the fantasy, lacked a quality of reality. It needed another touch to mold its colors into shape and give it meaning. But the artist was not she.

My eyes met the happy ones of the sailor in the photograph.

"Please, Jimmy," I pleaded silently to the boy whom I had never met, "please, come home to her soon!"

LIFE—COMPLETE

BEVERLY DAWN WILSON

The trees stand in beautiful, fall-like splendor,
Yielding their all to the earth, leaf by leaf!
Yet, we too our cherished days to time surrender
Each golden joy, last hope, and long gone grief.
As the dewdrops in lovely nights descend,
And glitter like tears upon the tender flowers,
Then by the morning sun to clouds again,
And fall once more in cool, refreshing showers.
Or as the waves, seeking heaven for release,
Clamor upon the sturdy, beaten shore,
Advance, and prove their broad outreach,
Then to the sea are gathered home once more.
Time's rhythm thus progresses and retreats,
And docile death, life's discord, soon completes.

THE LEFTOVER

GWEN JONES

It will not work,
This love affair,
For she's his dearest friend.
She's my friend, too,
And I don't want
His heart to be a "lend."
I guess I'm jealous,
Maybe so,
But still I have the right
To be with him
A little while
When she's not in his sight.
But will I have
To stand in line?
This for him I would do,
And yet, it's hard
To take what's left
Behind, when she is through.

ANAESTHESIA

JANE MOBERLY

And still,
In winter, under a dusky covering of leaves
Held high on swirling oceans of November snow—
We move across the hours, in every way
Sane, sure, and sensible.
Disdainful of a vague and steady fire that smoulders
Far below unruffled surfaces of everyday,
We stoop and rise again to take upon our shoulders
Each common sorrow and success existence has to give,
And say, most proud, with tongue in cheek—"we live."

Until,
One quick, unordinary spring, bursting its parts around us
In a bitter-tasteless-sweet embrace,
Binds heaven, with tenuous iron, to hell.
And uncertain; and half-fearing
To search reason for the truth, and past hearing
Words of judgment as before,
We draw a curtain; cloak our minds;
And blindly beat upon a solid door.
We lift our eyes in clouded questioning above
To skies that tell us nothing, save—we love.

LIMERICK

CHARLES LAMB

There once was a lovely young maid,
Who desired a necklace of jade.
The one that she got,
Proved to be hot,
And now she's in jail, I'm afraid.

TANT MIEUX

LORAINÉ MCGLONE

What then, after all is done, is forever?
A meagre life's span . . . a flash of endeavor?
A golden day; a night fraught
With crystal gems caught
Momentarily in a great black veil?
A precious short reprieve from the gale
That surrounds us as a wall.
No. We are too often in the maw!
To believe this sweetness will last.
Let us cease trying. Beauty will not be held fast.
Soon we will pass and have no more to tell.
You forget we are only flesh and that it's
Just as well.

OLD SONG OF SPRING

H. EDWARD RICHARDSON

During the feather weather of the spring—
When burgeons once again the maple red
And loose like moss; and frigid winds have fled
The brown plain, leaving the new world to sing
And bring an ancient hope to life again—
The lover walks resuscitated ways
Forgetting how he walked there other days
Or laughed in other mirths, or winced in pain;—
Or when a dear remembered friend walked down
The last lane of his life, and cursed the earth
That took his youth, green individual,
And greyly gave it to a soundless sound
Low in the soil, cold, cold, deep in earth's girth—
But the lover alive, his passions call.

THE WIDOWED QUEEN

GWEN JONES

Huge crowds protrude into the streets
As the funeral train moves slowly by.
The heavens don a darker garb,
For kings, as well as peasants, die.

Yes, kings are yet as mortal men;
They have no longer lease on life
Than those of lesser means than they—
A widow left—once Queen and wife.

The great procession winds its way
And stately down the street is seen
Through tears shed freely by all there
Save one—a widow, once a Queen.

She follows closely behind the hearse.
A veil half shields her graceful face,
Which bears no mark of grief or pain
Nor longing for a warm embrace.

Her heart requires a thicker veil;
Its shaking sobs are hard to hide;
Her lips kept firm, her head held high,
In misery she is forced to ride.

THE HOUSE OF MATCHES

H. EDWARD RICHARDSON

When you put each tiny match in place
So carefully, so precisely,
And planned it all so joyfully,
You had no thoughts of all that you would face.
When you built it all with life and tears
And calloused hands and sweat and strain,
You just stood back and laughed again
To know that you would laugh in later years.

But that was long ago and you were young,
Searching for the joy you never found;
For, long before your song was sung
And lost, your little house came crashing down.

FATE OF THE UNION

A Play in One Act

SHIRLEY SPIRES

ACT ONE

Obscene One: Senacloakroom in the Capitol. Congress is convening and the Senators have retired for a smoke. As the scene opens, Senator McNasty and Senator Krafty are engaged in a game of jacks in a far corner of the room. Senator Krafty has just kinged his jacks and is trying to pick them up. Senator McNasty looks on bitterly but is eagerly awaiting his turn.

SENATOR KRAFTY: (Accusingly) Thad! You're wearing a red tie!

SENATOR McNASTY: But it has red and black dots in it.

SENATOR KRAFTY: No matter. We can't be too careful, you know. (Misses, knocking over a kinged pair of jacks.) Damn! This McWrath affair must have got me upset.

SENATOR McNASTY: (Gleefully) It's my turn now! I'm on my ten's, aren't I?

Obscene Two: In another corner of the room, Senator Bull is practicing a speech he is planning to deliver. McCloy, the janitor, sits as an audience, obviously bored, but condescending. He smokes a pipe placidly.

SENATOR BULL: And so, gentlemen, I must stress the fight against corruption. I personally hate corruption! It's so corrupt! We must fight! Fight—Fight—Fight! (He employs the various antics of a cheerleader.)

McCLOY: Hmmpfh.

SENATOR BULL: I personally hate waste. It's so wasteful. We must stress frugality.

McCLOY: Frugality.

SENATOR BULL: I personally hate a coward. They're so cowardly. We must not hesitate! We must—(breaks off) What's French for march, McCloy?

McCLOY: Marchon.

SENATOR BULL: Marchon!!! Marchon—Marchon! (His voice dies to an effective whisper.)

McCLOY: Hmmpfh.

Obscene Three: The room has cleared. The senators have gone back to discussing the trying business of deciding the fate of the union. Stale smoke and dog-eared pulp magazines remain. The door opens and McCloy enters. Senator McNasty is in the far corner, sobbing, and McCloy, noticing, goes to him.

McCLOY: There, there, Senator. It's not all that bad.

SENATOR McNASTY: (Babbling incoherently) But I was on ten's—I was on

...
McCLOY: Come on, Senator, let's go. Everything will be all right. (McCloy leads Senator McNasty out the door, returns alone, breathing a sigh of relief.)

McCLOY: (Thinking aloud.) Well, I guess I can get back to my reading. (McCloy goes to bookshelves, removes a copy of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, finds his place and resumes reading.)

"MISSISSIPPI MUD"

BETTY MAYO

Everybody knew that Edie loved Hank madly—everybody except Hank, that is. He went about with his sleepy brown eyes oblivious to the nervous convulsions Edie experienced when he was in seeing or hearing distance.

Yes, Hank was her Apollo, Adonis, and Gregory Peck rolled into one, though he had the physique and mental ability of none of them. So while Apollo religiously practiced basketball and stuffed himself with unbelievable numbers of chocolate malts, Edie swayed between nervous convulsions and hyperirritability.

Romantic ballads sent her into a heavenly state which we unfortunates who weren't in love could never hope to experience. Her face would develop a weak, sublimely happy smile, while her eyes became misty and stared blindly through everything and everybody. We were terribly embarrassed when someone who didn't understand her condition witnessed one of these moments.

The spell came over her one day in October while we were quietly watching a basketball scrimmage. Hank Bland's ungainly form unfolded itself from the bench. Edie had her first attack as he loped down the floor and quietly reached up and placed the ball in the basket. We were mystified. How could anyone in her right state of mind be torn to pieces over six feet and six inches of skin, bone, and a few muscles? Tomorrow she would be normal again, and, meanwhile, we would humor the poor kid.

We were still humoring "the poor kid" six months later, and, to be sure, our personalities were not without their marks of wear and tear. One balmy, warm night in April Edie joined us for a lounging session at the Hideout. How fondly I remember that night! The jukebox responded loudly and beautifully to our many nickels. While we were discussing our plans for the summer, a sudden chill seemed to sweep over the booth. All eyes turned to Edie by force of habit. She was rigid, her eyes terrified and glassy, her face intermittently white, red, and pale green.

For a few moments we just stared. Then a shadow fell over the booth—a shadow which at that moment seemed the very foreboding of evil. Finally I rallied enough to tear my gaze from Edie's horror-stricken face. There, towering over us, was Hank.

"M-m-may I sit down?" he stammered.

Edie made some gasping noise which he took to be an affirmative. We sat there in silence, following brave attempts at conversation. I did all the trying, and Hank replied in his best manner, which was not too intelligent. After a dozen or so nickels were hesitantly dropped into the jukebox to the tune of "Mississippi Mud," Hank screwed up his courage enough to speak again.

"I have M-maybelle out here. Would—would you—you all want to go for a ride?"

Before the proclamation was finished, I was pushing a frantic, stumbling Edie into the jalopy. A battered uke lay in the back seat.

"There," I mumbled to myself, "this should solve the problem. Any idiot can sing."

So, as we chugged along in the soft night air, I strummed the old uke to the best of my ability, and Edie accompanied me with a squeak now and then. In the middle of "Mississippi Mud" I seemed to hear a few stumbling words from the driver's seat.

"Edie," Hank was saying, "would you like—do you think—could you go with me to the . . . ?"

Before the poor boy could finish speaking, Edie uttered a frantic "Yes!" The air seemed warmer, the car didn't jump and rattle so much, and three relieved voices joined in the final chorus of that utterly heavenly song, "Mississippi Mud."

THE DISCOVERY OF A MAN

H. EDWARD RICHARDSON

You must know who I am to ask me this.
Do you? Answer now, for I have no time
To waste—there is little left, little time
To search out what is worth the searching in the mist
Of unbearable, miasmic, cool-blue smoke that
Chills, and chills, and chills so cold that
Lips of ardent lovers crack and joints freeze
And bluebirds die with severed notes in throats.

But there were some moments not so ugly;
When air was bright frosted air; when piles
Of pure flaked snow lay too dry to roll
Upon the undulation of the dormant earth;
When crystal sabres hung, like melting mirrors,
From eaves of mansard roofs, catching prism-glints,
Flecking yellow warmth upon the sheeted earth . . .

But you, what right have you to know these things?

The right of guidance? Let me tell you now,
I have never known a wise man; your hunger
Will not be satiated by my words;
Your appetite will not be filled,
For death is your dessert; you cannot taste
Of it before the sense forgets itself.

All right, if your heart is set there I will
Tell you of a man's discovery, but
First, listen. I will speak of antiquities
Which preceded this great revelation:
A boy rushes from a black-screened door,
Running purposelessly into an ignorant air
Of happiness. In his hand he carries
A model airship; he breathes deeply the smell
Of drying banana oil, laughs a shout—

Older, he sweats in athletic vigor.
In animal tenseness he hovers at
A black line on a wide, brown, polished floor.
Then fast! the break, a slapping pass,
And the strategic crip, bringing hope again.
Within the tight, waning minute, (when a
Forgotten victory meant so much), the noise
Arose and pandemonium prevailed.
Amid the aimless roar's incipience,
A rim was pierced, a net was whisked.
On strange and exultant shoulders he rides
The classic hero's tote, remembering
For a pleasant instant while looking down

Into the arabesque of adulating faces,
The singular glory and surging of
His blood within as the ball arched high—then—
Dropped in casual perfection—

And in the later night, while December blew
Its icy breeze, he listened to the crumpling
Of a skirt while his downy face brushed the new
Smoothness of a sateen blouse, and his rumpling
Fingers fondled at margaric buttons.
Man has no power over age, like death;
He keeps a calendar and counts each breath.

What? No, that is not the discovery.
Wait a while—some more antiquity:

The boy grew, and said he would be wise,
Not knowing such a growth is ineffable;
Still, he tried heroically, taking paths
Of loneliness which searchers for the truth
Must take, and he became acquainted with
The shadow whose dark heart held his friendship.
In the visitations from the depths of
His friend's home, he tried to love the woman,
Finding her fruitfulness like *maremme*,
But one he found; for her his love
Leaped like a surging spray of orange forever;
No earthly pettiness could touch or hinder it.

But later, later, he began to see
That death was not so small, nor unearthly.

What? No, that was not the discovery,
And don't interrupt me.

Like I said,
It was gone and over. *Napoo*; he knew
That love was closest to an *arcanum*.

And with it dies the ardour of the act;
Rather than accept the *apyretic* kiss
After that, he would run like a *chaparral* cock,
But soon he quit, and with the rest took his seat,
Knowing that outside the depths was no retreat.

"Hail-fellow-and-well-met," he was welcomed back
To sit alone in dust, in antique rest,
Out off, incased, dark, but true comfort!
And what rascal said that love was best?

But, you grow anxious. I can tell by your
Harassed face. The important thing.

Would you guess?
No, not honesty; he was honest.
No, not truth; he never learned truth.
No, not virtue; that is a myth.
No, not moderation; he was too hungry.
No, not hope; he always had that.
No, not health; *Sampson* decayed.

No, not modesty, nor humility;
Those and others were his ingrained traits.

You want the answer? Venture once more first—

Wisdom? No. He had an element of that.

Listen, I will tell you. Here is the scene:

During one dark night with his shadowed friend,
While they passed between them like playing cards
His *seriatim* of sad yesterdays,
He hesitated, as if dropping a card or two.

"You wait out here, old friend. All right?"

"Yes, but the restaurant is dirty, don't you think?"

"Just the same, the coffee is good. Wait?"

"I don't drink it; it gives me the fevers,"

The friend replied, and with the statement melted
Down into the opaque folds of his robe.

Then, while drinking hot black coffee he made
The discovery. Here it is. Listen.

*Strong black coffee in silver spoons
Always looks amber beneath white lights.*

Yes, that is all. That is sufficient.

Come walk with you? Tell you more. You
Are interested?

Well, I would walk farther,
For I am brave enough,
But tired, and far too practical.

SONNET I

LORAIN McGLONE

I have thought there are in dear things long dead
But remote antiquities of perfumes
Purpled long in sweet-scented twilight rooms;
And nothing . . . nothing ever done or said
Is brave enough to recall completely
The sweet true colors of these Yesterdays.
Despairingly knew that its wrath and hate stays
Faster and surer than a remembered discreetly-
Given first embrace. Frail? Yes. But dearer
Than never arriving tomorrow's blooms;
Even though they are more sure and nearer
Than the forgotten roses and their perfumes;
Scentable only when in tin mirrors
Is reflected those musty, proud old rooms.

THE NEXT FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIR

SHIRLEY SPIRES

He awoke with a vague remembrance of having dreamed. The dream was vague and shadowy but he knew it was the same one. The men—the uniformed men—what uniform? The boots on the stair tapping, scraping, or was it thundering?

The same dream—each of the three nights he had been home. Had there only been three? Had he ever been gone, or was that, too, a long, violent dream?

"You're home now, Son. Don't let's talk about over there."

But I want to—I just feel that I have to . . .

She was right, of course. What was there to say?

A heavy hand on his shoulder—the man with the gold filled teeth and flat straw hat. *How does he happen to be here?*

"And how is it over there, young man?" Concern in his voice—only not really waiting or listening for the answer.

"It's about the same, I guess . . ."

Ours is not to reason why

Ours is but to do or die . . .

Was that the way it went? Do or die? Do *and* die?

"All I thought about was how I'd love to taste a piece of Mom's apple pie." No, better say blueberry. More effective.

"Have some more, Son; you look thin."

The most terrifying part of the dream was the resignation. The uniforms surged through the house, their boots clack-clacking, scarring, scraping. But he had not resisted nor was he surprised. They came and went and came back again and all the time he had felt—not indignation, not blind fury, but a hopeless remorse.

But it was a cold war. As cold as the steel of the bayonets. As cold as the bodies that had stiffened and were forgotten. Any bodies—all bodies. Not just the great glorified, personified *OUR*. Bodies were bodies.

Footsteps. Too soft, though. "Can't you sleep, Son? I thought I heard you tossing."

"I'm okay. Just a bad dream, I guess."

Murmurs of solicitude. Receding patter of *her* footsteps.

He fell into a troubled sleep—a watchful, wakeful sleep, and waited for the next footsteps.

A MINISTER'S PRAYER

HOWARD COOP

I do not ask
That people come to hear
A message wrought with eloquence,
But as I speak His word
Christ may be near.

I do not ask
A church with music sweet,
But one with love and fellowship
Where people come to kneel
At Jesus' feet.

I do not ask
For shouting praise of men
But that the host who come to hear
Will show the world that they
With Christ have been.

"IF"

BEVERLY DAWN WILSON

If all life flowed as the warmth of wine
And all life ran as the rivers twine,
If there were no sorrows to war our souls,
No desolate hearts to pay the toll,
Would our caravan of time be eternal?

If the ocean of life held nothing but beauty
And the pathway thereof was free from all duty,
If those who are strong were not trampled by fate
And courage not killed by temptations in wait,
Would our ideals today be a dream?

We could know no joy if we knew no sorrow:
There would be no longing to conquer tomorrow.
Not one beat is missed in a heart that is true,
Because pain is our baptism, love is our virtue.
Build a destiny for our intangible souls!

From each yesterday and today build for tomorrow;
Lay a foundation of faith, because evil brings sorrow.
On many roads will our wild fancies play,
But memories are one gift death does not steal away.
Our best is constructed by will!

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FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, take pride in presenting this, the first issue of our nineteenth volume.

SPRING RAIN

MARJORIE BURT

The soft misty drizzle began to change into a fine rain. The steel-gray sky deepened into a sullen black, heavy and threatening. Cars going in a steady stream through the business section of Freeport switched on their lights.

Janet Dedley felt a slight chill through her soft spring coat. She tilted the plaid umbrella against the wind, and clutched her bag of groceries closer. Her fingers explored dubiously the outlines of the cans and vegetables that became more and more evident through the damp paper. As her heels clicked on the wet pavement, she mentally placed the contents of the bag on the neatly arranged shelves of her pantry and refrigerator.

In her mind she walked through the rooms of the lovely French Colonial house she had shared with her husband, Roger, during the four years of their marriage. She always felt a glow of pride and self-satisfaction each time she walked up the graceful curve of stone steps, and entered the living room. Pale green walls, polished oak floors, deep green furnishings and drapes—just enough contrast in the bright yellow shag rugs, and the multi-colored books in the shelves flanking the fireplace.

Janet was known throughout Benton Terrace as a model housewife. Her home was always ready to receive the most important guests. Yet, without apparent effort, she still looked much as she had when she first became Mrs. Roger Dedley—wife of the city's youngest District Attorney.

Janet had been secretary to Roger's partner, Mark Atherton, a quiet, thoughtful young man who had dated her for almost a year. When Mark's partner suddenly began centering his attention to Janet, Mark withdrew his attention. Janet and Roger were married three months later. They had to postpone their honeymoon when Roger was suggested as a candidate for District Attorney.

Janet's business methods had been transferred to homemaking. She and Roger lived, ate, worked, and visited on a rigid schedule. Even Janet's menus were chosen from a carefully prepared card file of well-balanced meals. Tonight they were having menu Number Seven—Roger's favorite.

Through the rain, which was now a steady downpour, she saw that the clock in the jeweler's window said 5:20. She would have to hurry the remaining blocks. She had spent too much time talking to Mary Lothrop on her way into town.

The rain was beginning to soak through her shoes, and she felt really cold. As she turned toward home, she glanced at the brightly lighted windows of the small restaurant on the first floor of the modern office building that housed the offices of the District Attorney. Perhaps she should go in there, have a cup of coffee, and call Roger. She could ride home with him in the car. He was working until 6:00 tonight. By preparing broiled steak instead of the roast, she could still have dinner at the regular time.

At the thought of Roger, her throat tightened. She could see him at his desk—collar unbuttoned, sleeves rolled up, dark hair rumpled as he bent in concentration over a sheaf of papers. She felt a sudden warm glow of affection for him. After four years of marriage she loved him, perhaps more than ever. She hadn't been showing that love as much as she should have lately. Just little things, really, were what made the difference.

Suddenly she thought of how she used to go back to the office with Roger when he had extra work during the first few months of their marriage. Those evenings together had been so good. Two people, working in cooperation, enjoying just being with each other. Laughing, contented, as they rode home. Why not again. She could still take dictation and type with competent speed. She smiled, and straightened her shoulders as she reached the restaurant.

As she hesitated, readjusting the load in her arms, she glanced through the huge windows. The rain, sluicing down the glass, made it difficult to see the interior. Somehow, dimly seen through the curtain of water, it occurred to her that it was much like her own home. Modern to the final degree,

bright with the gleam of fluorescent light on chrome, white linen, and polished floors. Yet, for the first time, she sensed a lack of something—warmth or friendliness, perhaps. She hesitated for just an instant, undecided about going inside. She moved forward, reached for the door and stopped—staring, incredulous!

A dark-haired young man in a gray suit was seated with his back to the door, leaning toward a girl whose face Janet could see clearly. She wasn't really beautiful, just pretty in an ordinary, rather pleasant way. The blond hair around her face had curled from the dampness until it was almost untidy. Her eyes were intent on the young man's face. As she eagerly related something, he reached across the table and took both of her hands in his. Janet felt a dull, stupid numbness creeping over her. That man—the shape of his head, the gray suit, the way he leaned forward in his chair. *It couldn't be Roger.* Yet, how could she be mistaken?

Then her mind began to function more clearly. It was foolish to stand here in the rain, watching a couple whom she had never seen before. At least, she was certain she had never seen the girl before—and the man? Well, it couldn't be Roger. She remembered his saying he was working until 6:00. Something to do with a legal tangle over the new factory site.

The rain running down the window made it almost impossible to see the two now, and she reached for the door again, this time determined to walk inside and call Roger from the phone booth at the back of the restaurant. As her hand touched the wet coldness of the door knob, a thought popped in her mind like a tiny explosion, "What if it were Roger?"

If she left now, she might never know. If she opened the door, there would be no escape. If it were Roger, she would leave him. If not, then she would have the knowledge always that she had not trusted him.

She clutched the brown paper bag, now tearing in places from the rain, held the umbrella more firmly in her other hand, turned and started up the street. Her shoes made small splashing noises as they came down on the wet pavement. Wrinkles from a frown of worry marred the smoothness of her forehead, and her brown eyes mirrored a hurt bewilderment. She bent her head to look at her watch—5:37. She would still have time to fix the roast if she hurried.

Perhaps she'd wear that blue crepe dress Roger liked tonight, a touch of perfume, and a little more lipstick than usual. She could just as easily write those letters tomorrow, and stay with him while he watched television.

Upstairs in the office, Roger Dedley stacked the finished pages on his desk with a smile of satisfaction. He grabbed his coat and felt in his pocket for the car keys as he waited for the elevator. He'd missed Janet more than usual today.

As he dashed out the side entrance toward his car, he almost collided with a small figure under a plaid umbrella. "I'm sor— Jan, honey, what are you doing here?" he asked. Janet, without a word, let him take the bag of groceries. She shut the wet umbrella as she climbed into the car. Roger ran to his side, and as he slid in beside her, she reached up to smooth his rumpled hair.

Just as the car passed the restaurant, a dark-haired young man and a blond woman came out the door.

The rain had almost stopped.

EACH AND ALL

GWEN JONES

Escape from reality isn't just sought
By poets who write of the past,
Or preachers who teach of a life after death,
Or a drunkard who lives by a flask.
Each human being, no matter what rank,
Fate in this world has given a part—
Has his own secret stream, some small spot he can dream,
Half concealed by the walls of his heart.

NO WAR

JAMES A. SNOW

Slowly the column straggles along the road.

"All right, you guys, close it up if you want to get your goddam heads shot off."

There is a grumbling among the men. They are dirty, cold and hungry. A V of F-80's zooms overhead.

"Lucky bastards! They get all the gravy; one little mission and then they get to go back and crap out on a nice warm rack while the most that we can hope for is some place to put our sleeping bags and hope that we get a long enough break to get a little use out of them."

They reach the top of the hill and before them they see a large valley.

"Displace and set up here. Put that B.A.R. up on that ridge there. Jerry, you take your fire team over there on that knob and act as lookout. Scotty, get that ammo up here. You guys dig in deep. We may have company anytime and we will be here quite a while, so if you want to stay with us keep your butts down."

The day turns into night, and the men get more restless as the blackness of the Korean winter seems to smother them. Then it starts. The gooks with their bugles and firecrackers begin to play their game of nerves with the jarheads. No sleep tonight, you think. Then slowly the fatigue in your body overcomes the screaming of the bugles and the blast of the firecrackers, and you drop off to sleep. You think that you can sleep through hell, you are so tired. The trumpets stop. Everyone awakens with a start. It's too quiet, and that is even worse than the noise. Johnny Simms, 18, Indianapolis, Indiana, caresses his M1 and thinks of the time in boot camp when his D. I. said, "Take good care of that rifle, lad; one of these days you will find that she is the best girl friend that you have ever had."

The men peer out into the blackness, trying to see something, anything that will break the suspense of waiting. Then it starts. The gooks open up with their mortars. You can't hear them coming; they are there all of a sudden and there is nothing you can do about it but pray. Pray that your name isn't on one of them.

Jerry yells, "Stand by, men. Here they come." The B.A.R.'s begin opening up, and by their staccato song you know that death is near by. There they are. God, look at them. They look like a tidal wave. No time for talking now. You pull back on the operating rod of your M1 and slam a round into the chamber. You peer through the sight and slowly squeeze off the round and send the messenger of death out into the night. Then the men all around begin opening up. The night is turned into what looks like a Fourth of July celebration at home. The air is thick with the smell of cordite, and your eyes burn with it. Beside you a man cries out and falls over, clutching his forehead. "Corpsman, Corpsman," you call. The boy in the blue dungarees comes crawling toward you with his bag over his shoulder. "Over there, I think Hank got it." He inches his way over the side of the fallen man and, taking hold of his wrist, feels his pulse. He lets the hand fall to the man's side, shakes his head, and shoves off to try to help someone else. You want to cry. Hank was your running mate in the States. You think of the nights that you spent in Pusan. It's too late to cry now; you are too busy trying to keep yourself alive.

Then a hot, searing pain enters your side and again you scream for the corpsman. Not for a buddy this time but for yourself. You look down and see the gaping wound in your side and you gasp. You don't want to die. The blackness closes in about you. The cold won't bother you any more, Johnny.....

"Dear Mrs. Simms. We regret to inform you . . ." NO! No war, but try to tell the men who are sacrificing their lives every day and the mothers, wives, and sweethearts that sit anxiously waiting for their loved ones and being afraid to answer the phone or door. No, there is no war—only the heartache and grief that accompany it.

OCEAN OF LIFE

BEVERLY WILSON

I may be a fool, or it's wise I may be,
Then perhaps only human and blind;
But I yearn to be free on life's wide open sea,
Sprayed with waves of the foamy brine.

I am weary of fret, and passions denied,
And I fear my dreams dead through time.
I want to sail high on life's turbulent sea,
Where green waters and white lace entwine.

I have ruled high in joy, and bowed low to pain,
Each memory's been placed on my shrine.
Now I want to be tossed on life's wild, fearless sea,
Where the crown of freedom is mine!

GWEN JONES

What interest to another man?
The cares I have must be borne alone
By me—no one else would rise and stand
And battle for the rights I own.

My griefs lie heavy on my heart,
They cause me pain, I clutch my breast;
But I, not thou, must grip the dart
And tear it out ere I have rest.

Don't say thy soul is stricken
That thy tears are shed for me,
That stream will ne'er wash clean this wound
Nor bring relief to me.

Thy tears are only for thyself
(I'm not condemning thee),
For the depth of my soul is so dark and deep
That thou couldst never see.

Thou nor nought else will understand
Why gladness I will share with thee;
But my sorrows are mine for my own private land
And not for the whole world to see.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

GWEN JONES

I am listening to a warm breeze whispering softly through the leafy
branches.

It is a happy wind

And it inspires the tiny grasses to dance to its gay tune.

Yes, the tune it sings is one of love—our love, yours and mine.

The birds take up the song and carry it to their nests unfolding its calmness
to their young ones.

In our joy unknowingly we are bringing joy to others;

Our love is in its Spring; we are a symbol of the hope of the world.

Here on this lofty hill we listen to the music of nature never knowing it is we that inspire the symphony.

A cloud appears, a shadow darkens the heavens which only a moment before were of softest hue composed;

A gust of icy wind envelopes our soft breeze causing a discord in our sweet love song;

The birds, frightened, flee from their downy homes taking their families to far distant lands;

The leaves, once happily dancing with the grasses, are swept into a whirlpool of chilled air and are sent up, up, torn away from their dear Mother Earth.

A heavy gloom descends upon our hearts.

I fear the storm will sweep you from my arms like the leaves.

Our lovely music is now only a faint echo in our terrified breasts.

Above the roar another song rings out. The wild wind gossips, saying our love is dead, is gone forever, never to be recaptured.

Your hand slips slowly from my trembling fingers.

We turn, suddenly defiant of the raging turmoil, our eyes meet and, try as it might, that chaotic grip cannot tear us apart.

We stand on the same lofty spot, hair blowing, faces uplifted, and cast our tear-stained eyes toward heaven.

We have won!

The tumultuous clouds are forced apart by a kind of spirit, a spirit called Faith, a stream of light shines down upon us, triumphant, arm in arm, listening.

—There! Far off on the horizon—our winged friends are returning, the lusty gale, defeated, subsides into silence, and a light breeze follows, bringing with it familiar notes;

The birds, grasses, leaves, loudly sing, and our hearts leap up and join in the song.

NOT GOODBYE

WANDA SMYTH

The rain was only a mist now. It had ceased to patter on the roof with vengeance and glee as if it were enjoying spoiling the picnic. Now, it seemed soft and caressing on the early flowers and soft grass in the backyard. It was just a spring rain, after all, and was trying to be helpful as it fed the thirsty, eager vegetation.

And the picnic was not ruined. The house fairly came to life with young people who seemed to take possession of everything from the food in the kitchen to the piano in the living room. They laughed and sang and played host by greeting those who arrived just a little late. Dr. Bach, who lived alone and was now everywhere and nowhere all at once, trying to supervise her energetic group of college students, should have relaxed. (Eventually she got wise and did let things ramble along in an easy way that made for happy relaxation for all.) The group needed no hostess, really; they entertained themselves.

A girl paused on her journey between dining room table, where she had just placed a large, attractively arranged relish tray in the center of the lace cloth, and the kitchen table, where more dishes were waiting for the transfer. The little window before which she stopped was in a tiny hall-way between the dining room and the kitchen. It looked out on the rain-drenched backyard, growing grey with dusk.

For a moment, a very brief moment, a feeling of sadness that was neither dejection nor depression, but rather a deep melancholy, took the smile from her face. Her mind's eye pushed away the greyness and mist—far away, it pushed them—and the sun, brilliant, warm May sun, came shining through and illuminated the scene with lazy warmth and content-

ment. A very soft breeze, seemingly lazy, too, rustled the leaves on the large trees and stirred the gaily colored paper streamers and wrappings on the *pinata* as it swung back and forth between them. The flowers—pink, yellow, and violet—nestled in their green leaves in the rock-lined flower beds around the back door and along the house and by the steps leading across into a neighbor's backyard, and nodded their heads faintly in the breeze as they greeted newcomers and smiled at all. From out the kitchen window came the spicy smells which told of experiments with foreign food; and then there were other smells, smells of browning buns and freshly baked cookies that were familiar and that brought sighs from those outside.

Some sat on the green, new grass, and others waited turn for the metal lawn chairs. She remembered that she had preferred the grass and that its fresh, earthy smell had made her homesick, momentarily, for the farm.

She remembered, too, that HE had arrived a little late, while they were taking group pictures. Even now she could see him striding across Dr. Bach's front lawn toward them with that light, arrogant swagger, smiling with that quick, infectious smile, and calling to them to wait.

Later, they had taken turns being blindfolded and twirled around and around until dizzy; then, with broomstick in hand, they struck at the *pinata*. She had been shy and cautious, reluctant to be in the limelight. When Dr. Bach had gone into the house to check on the food, the boy, at present blindfolded, had lowered the handkerchief and struck with weight and accuracy at the unsuspecting, brilliant paper bag. Then, shouting and laughing, all had made a mad rush for the cellophane-wrapped sweets.

She remembered the food, too, and where she had eaten on the grass near the rock garden with a girl friend. He, she remembered, ate, a little apart from the others, on some old wooden steps—now grey with rain—that led to an upstairs apartment.

The spicy, unfamiliar tastes of much chili powder and garlic had blended with the familiar ones of hot dogs and cokes and peanut butter cookies and added to the feeling of intoxication from warm sunshine and laughter and happiness. She thought that she had never known quite that feeling before—a feeling of strange elation and yet strange peace.

The feeling continued through a dreamy Spanish song, sung by assorted voices, some in harmony, others not, and increased while grey-green eyes squinted at the corners when the quick smile came for her and hands barely touched.

And suddenly the song was gone and the sun was gone or lost behind the false landscapes of smoke from factories and high buildings. Twilight had stolen in and forced away the music and sunshine and picnic.

Looking back, she saw a friendship too late begun and too early destined for separation by a religion so different, a cultural and economic environment so different that it was hard to believe they had met at all; separation, finally, across a thousand miles of mountains and farms, cities and towns, state and states—a thousand miles into forever.

Then school was out and she went home to the farm. The mountains that had once meant so much to her, meant only a trap that summer, a trap that defied her to dream of crossing them to find him. It was a strange summer of moods. One day she would decide to dare dream; the next she would torture herself with the hopeless question of "why." She turned from everything that reminded her of him, whether it was a religious article written by a member of his faith or a ball game played by a team from his city. "I will say goodbye, I will forget!" she promised vehemently.

But she didn't. Still the grey-green eyes came to haunt her with the memory of a Spanish melody and a warm, spring afternoon.

So went the summer, and with the crisp, cool mornings of September and with the packing for her return to school, came the answer. The girl smiled, not with amusement, but rather with meditation, into the gloom. Yes, such a simple answer, but one that could come only with time, perhaps. Not goodbye. It was the wrong approach. It was impossible to weed from her association everything that reminded. Instead, the answer was acceptance and understanding. Everyone she met and for whom she had cared at all

became, in a way, a part of her, a part to be used in her future for the understanding of new experiences and to be looked back on with affection. Precious moments of happiness, then, could not always be continued, nor might that same moment ever again occur in the same way. But that picnic on a sunny May afternoon could and would be a souvenir, as would her first formal dance or her first plane ride. It was quite probable that they would not meet again, but she did not rebel now against the thought. . . .

"Hey, Kathy," called a cheery voice from the kitchen, "wanna serve tamales?"

"Sure thing, Jeannette. Be right there," she answered, and turned away without a sigh from the rain-soaked steps, thickening dusk, and soft mist which spoke of the past, to the warm, cozy cheeriness of the party—and Now.

LOOK, DAD. NO HANDS

HOWARD COOP

"Look, Dad. No hands," he cried,
As he came home from school
When he had learned to ride
His birthday bike.

He learned new skills each day.
With eagerness he ran
To show his dad the way
He learned new things.

His eighteenth birthday came,
And one day soon he got
A note that was the same
As others got.

He did not hesitate
To go or wonder what
Would be his star of fate,
But gladly went.

His birthday came again
As it had done before.
It rained a chilling rain
That afternoon.

He heard the people talk
And saw the stare as he
Went slowly down the walk
Toward the house.

The door bell rang—
In patriotic pride
He stood and waited—still.
"Look, Dad. No hands," he cried.

WHAT'S THAT NAME AGAIN?

ROBERT ALLEN POPE

If there's one thing I cannot do, it is to remember names of people to whom I have just been introduced. There seems to be one minor flaw in the way introductions are carried out today. Nobody remembers anybody's name. In case of mass introductions involving six or more people, a man is lucky if he can emerge from the confusion remembering his own name.

This is easily understandable, though. The man is so busy observing all the trumped-up niceties of the ritual that he can't be bothered with anything so unimportant as a name.

Though he may have the rest of the evening to parade his personality before the people, these niceties demand that he shoot the works all at once. It is usually very painful, as it involves muscles he hasn't used in years.

First there is a vigorous handshake to execute. It is universally accepted that you can't trust a man with a flabby handshake. Unless a man rearranges all the bones in your hand and a number in your forearm, he is put down as a potential criminal. Therefore our friend musters all of his strength and clamps down.

Just about the same thing applies to this eye-to-eye business. Our friend must remember to look the other fellow squarely in the eye, or eyes, depending upon his range.

A man with shifty eyes can't be trusted. He's usually hiding something, they say. It could be his right hand, as the fellow who is so intent on peering into the innermost depths of his eye sockets usually misses connections with it and winds up shaking a sleeve.

Naturally, there's the old personality smile to be turned on. It seems that the majority of men have a muscle that runs from their hands to their mouths. Every time that the hand is extended and shaken the mouth automatically flies open. When two people with extra nice teeth meet, it's hard to tell whether they are shaking hands or trying to bite each other. Then it's customary to conclude all this with a witty saying of some sort. Fortunately, these gems are always garbled or gurgled and remembered no longer than the names.

So there you have it. The two men are so busy Indian wrestling, trying to hypnotize each other, counting the other's teeth and mumbling *bon mots* that there isn't room on the program for anything else.

When a man meets a woman, it's even more confusing. Most men don't know exactly what the rules are for shaking hands with women. The man cautiously extends a hand, and just as he withdraws it, the woman sticks her hand out. The man sticks his hand out again, but the woman has changed her mind and withdraws hers. A few seconds of this and they look like a mixed doubles team in a log sawing contest.

And, too, some women think that they must flatter every man into thinking he is a great wit and automatically burst out with a shrill laugh at his very first words, regardless of what they are. He could say, "The pigs just ate your grandmother," and she would still give that cackle. Naturally, the names are forgotten in the excitement.

When women meet women it's perfectly obvious why names are skipped. They are too busy taking inventory of what the other one is wearing to be bothered. In all cases the real introductions come after they have been calling one another by the wrong name for half an hour.

BOOKS

MARJORIE BURT

Books, books, and more books,
Long shelves of books,
And each one looks
As if to say,
Read me—today!
Books, books, and more books.

History books with covers dull,
And all in all,
Both short and tall,
They pompous seem.
You wouldn't dream of
Tales of heroes and castle's fall.

English books so stiff and prim,
Tho' the page is dim
You still get a glim,
That the rule's the rage,
Through every age,
You'll soon know whether it's "he," or "him."

Books of fiction with colors bright,
They catch the light,
Though not the height
Of education,
(Some seek sensation)
To many readers they're chief delight.

Encyclopedias are wise and fat.
If the size of a gnat,
Napoleon's hat,
The work of a bee,
You want to see,
You'll find it in volume this or that.

Music, art, and geology,
Psychology,
Geography,
World history,
Some mystery,
The shelves hold all, for you and me.

In everything you want to know,
If you seek to grow,
Whether fast or slow,
There's no better way,
Than to go today,
And choose from the book shelves, row by row.

Books, books, and more books.
Long shelves of books,
And each one looks
As if to say,
"Read me—today!"
Books, books, and more books.

ONE YEAR TO LIVE

SALLY E. FUGATE

The other day a group of students were sitting around a table in the grill drinking coffee, cokes, or tomato juice. The talk drifted from the ball game, various subjects that were being taken, the merits of different teachers, the newest couple on campus, to Tom, Dick, and Harry's drunkenness, and Betty's and Joe's split-up after their long courtship. Some were leafing through books pretending to study while the inevitable pair was whispering the latest gossip.

From the next table could be heard the boasts and complaints commonly voiced by typical college students. Yes, it was just another dull afternoon.

A boy walked up and, after a "Hi" to everyone, pulled up a chair and sat down. This one was different. He was an ex-G. I. who had served two years in the army. He had contracted a disease while in the service, and although everything possible had been done for him, he had been given one year to live.

All his life he had wanted to go to college. With one year to live and nothing else to do, he decided to fulfill his ambition if for no other reason than to take his mind off his inevitable end. Although he was only twenty-two years old, he was cold and hard. His grey-blue eyes showed nothing but hatred. He despised all that was beautiful and full of life.

All of the students present knew about the boy, and with or without malice, the conversation mysteriously drifted to the subject of death. The ex-G. I. spoke low and tired, but everyone listened to his words.

"When I die," he said, "I want to be buried between two murderers."

The group gasped but fell silent as he continued to speak with a sacrilegious tone.

"I want to be buried at midnight when all is dark and everything is silent except evil souls. For pall-bearers, I want six staggering drunks. Instead of a singing choir I want seven girls dressed in unhuman costumes to do the devil dance. In place of preaching, I prefer a lecture on Communism, and I want a soloist tossing 'Blues in the Night'."

The expression on the boy's face now became almost immoral. His eyes rolled back and closed. Slowly, he continued to relate his preferences.

"I request a bottle of 'Four Roses' placed at my head and slimy dice in my hand. I don't want flowers or tears, but, instead, laughing, smoking, gambling, and drinking."

Someone coughed. The ex-G. I. opened his eyes, looked at his watch, rose to his feet, and began to walk away.

Looking over his shoulder, he said, "Hell of a day, isn't it?"

SUMMER, 1952

MARJORIE BURT

Heat waves shimmering, weaving, rising
From the sidewalks and macadam,
Like a thousand swaying cobras,
Ghostly, pale, and misty cobras,
To the sound of summer's flute-song.

Winter warmth is welcomed, sought-for
As we stretch our hands to catch it,
Use the means we know to guard it,
Now, the coolness of the winter
Seek we in each breeze and shower.

In the summer, heat is victor,
Cold is master in the winter.
In the spring and fall together
Try as friends to make concessions,
But as always comes the struggle.

Spring, then summer, fall and winter,
Eternal rhythm of the seasons.
One, two, three, four, time is marching
On his journey never ceasing.
Each man watches as he passes.

Summer nights, warm air caressing,
Stars like diamonds on black velvet,
While night's yellow eye above us
Lights the path we knew in daylight—
Touches it with soft moon-magic.

Moments of pure happiness are
Like a painting in the memory
That completed shows some sadness.
For each instant as it passes
Is forever lost and hidden.

And the summer, just beginning,
Carries to us all this message,
"Live each hour to the fullest,
Love today, know that tomorrow,
Yesterday will be this moment."

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*Eastern Kentucky
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FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, take pride in presenting this, the second issue of our nineteenth volume.

MAUD

MARTHA HERDT

"Break it! Break it!" she screamed, and then silence—the silence that closes in about you and comforts you. Yet, you're waiting, for what, you don't know.

The doctor was bending over her body. He shook his head, while he gently pulled the sheet up over her face. Aunt Maud was dead. Incredible, for you could still feel her presence, because of the gilt-framed mirror, which was her favorite possession.

"Jeanne dear, I think we'd better go down stairs to the library. Doctor Simons will take care of your aunt. Bill, check with him about arrangements for the funeral, and the death certificate. I'm certainly glad it's all over with. Here Jeanne, take my arm." Jim Melvin opened the bedroom door, and silently the room was emptied, except for the corpse, Dr. Simons and Bill. Numbly all filed along the carpeted hall and down the circular stairs to the hallway below. Light from the library knifed through the gloom of the hall. Each found a chair in the room, but no one spoke, for each was busy with his own thoughts.

Solicitously Jim whispered to Jeanne, "Dear, do you care for some water or want to lie down? I know it is a shock to you, but Maud must have been in agony to scream the way she did. She's at rest and so—."

"Jim, please stop consoling me. I'm perfectly able to care for myself. None of you need stay with me. The servants will be here, if I need anyone. Stell and George need to go home and rest. It has been a long day. Please leave me alone for awhile." Jeanne implored with her whole being, and even though no one felt that she should be alone, each one said his goodbye and left.

Jeanne walked to the large leather-top desk and unlocked the top drawer. From it she took a sheaf of papers. Quickly she glanced through them until she found the one she was looking for. She returned all the other papers to the drawer, and locked it just as Bill entered.

"Jeanne, where is everyone?" he inquired.

"I told them all to leave, Bill. I'd rather be alone, but I've been thinking. Would you mind staying with me this evening?" Jeanne asked as she walked to the wing-back chair near the bridge lamp.

"Sit in the chair across from me. I have a letter Maud left me to read. She told me about it several months ago. When she died, I was to read it alone, but I don't feel like being all alone. Since you were so close to her, I don't think she would mind you staying."

Bill Caldwell moved the other chair within the arc of the lamplight and settled back to listen. Jeanne broke the seal on the large envelope and drew from it a letter.

She read: "Dear Jeanne, I instructed you to open this immediately upon my death. I have a will which leaves everything to you, but this is written to make a request. Before anyone can go through my room, please do this one thing. *Break* my gilt-edge mirror. I command this of you! You have been my only joy, and I don't want you to be as unhappy as I've been. Tell no one of your deed, until you have completed it. Love, Maud."

Bill searched Jeanne's face for emotion, but found none. Oddly enough she could pass for Maud's double, that is, the young and vivacious Maud. How long had he known and loved Maud? It seemed only a few years since he had met her on a South-Pacific cruise, but it had been thirty years ago. Odd to think of that cruise now. Maybe the mention of the mirror reminded him of their meeting. She bought the mirror in a quaint shop in the Indies. It had always been her most highly prized possession.

"Bill, will you go up with me to break the mirror?" Jeanne interrupted his thoughts. She was opening the door, before he realized it.

"Wait, Jeanne. Tell me why would Maud want a thing she loved destroyed? The mirror has been sought by many and she refused large amounts of money for it. Now she wants it broken. Why not sell it?" Bill was talking

to the open door, for Jeanne hadn't stopped to listen. Leaping up from his chair, he strode out of the room and up the stairs, where he found Jeanne rattling the door knob of her aunt's bedroom door.

"Bill, open this! Maud wanted it destroyed, so I'll destroy it. Please!" she begged. He took a ring of keys from his pocket, but the bedroom key wasn't there.

"Jim gave me these, but the right key isn't here. The body has been taken to Morgan's Funeral Home, but the door was open when Dr. Simons and I left. I don't know who pushed it to. Let's go back down stairs to the library, and I'll find a screwdriver. If you must get in, I'll take the door off the hinges."

Firmly he led her through the darkened hall and stairway to the lighted library. There Jeanne paced before the french-doors, as Bill sat and watched.

"Jeanne, you're working yourself up unnecessarily. You must admit that Maud had some queer quirks. This was one of them. Please sit down and act rationally."

As Bill spoke, Jeanne glanced to a life-size portrait of Maud over the fireplace.

"Bill, she must have had a reason for wanting the mirror broken. I just figured out what she was wanting broken. She screamed, 'Break it' for hours, even after the doctor gave her a sedative. I wonder if there is anything in her will or other documents about the mirror?"

Jeanne was now looking down at the desk. She pulled out a drawer and flicked an unseen button. Slowly the picture slid up the wall to reveal a safe. Bill sprang from his chair and hurriedly moved to the fireplace.

Defly Jeanne whirled the combination, and the door swung open. The safe had stacks of papers, which seemed worthless to them.

"Place them on the desk and I'll read through them. If we can find nothing pertaining to the mirror, I'll ask you to open the door of the bedroom." Jeanne slowly looked over the papers, and because her progress was slow, Bill began to read searchingly.

Quietly time passed and the two read on. With fascination they read letters that Maud had received from dealers asking for her price on the mirror. Attached to each letter was a carbon copy of her answer, two words, "no price."

As the pile of letters shrank, the two readers began to read more rapidly, as each letter seemed so much like the one before. Near the bottom of the stack Bill found a packet of correspondence dated 1922. Untying the cord about them, he began to read. Saying nothing of his discovery, Bill began to read the letters written from the dealer in the islands. Slowly the years of hurt and anger were renewed within Bill. When he finished the last letter, he knew why Maud hadn't married him, as well as her reason for wanting to break the mirror. He tied the packet back together, and walked to the mantle where he stood before the fire.

"Jeanne, you can stop reading. I've found the answer in these old letters. I've read them all, but here is a summary of their content. When Maud bought the mirror, she left her address with the dealer. She felt that there would be others at home who would like a similar mirror. If the dealer procured any others, he was to let her know. As you know, the people of the islands are an ignorant, superstitious lot. Not long after her return he wrote her. In his letter he begged her to return the mirror. He told her it had a curse placed on it by a voodoo-priestess. Maud, being the person she was, was fascinated with the thought. She wrote and asked him what the curse was. He answered that it was placed on the owner of the mirror. The owner would be beautiful and vain and would worship herself. She would be unable to resist the mirror, and she would sit looking at it for hours."

Jeanne broke in on him by saying, "Really, Bill, Maud wouldn't believe that, and even so, we know how beautiful she was. She had always been that, before she went to the islands. Anyway, that wouldn't be such a bad curse."

Bill interjected, "Wait, I'm not finished. Along with it the curse also said that the mirror's owner would be lonely, never would marry, and would die a horrible death. You must admit that all of these things are true. Maud

was loved by many, but she wouldn't marry. Why? I'll tell you why. She was in love with her beauty. No one could equal it. If she could have found an equal, she would have been jealous."

Furiously Jeanne argued with Bill. "Who's being vain! Your pride and ego were crushed because she wouldn't marry you. Everyone knows you tried hard enough. If she knew of the curse, why didn't she break the mirror?"

Patiently Bill continued to explain, "The curse added that if the mirror was broken, its owner would die. Maud evidently believed that it must be as true as the other. She wrote to the dealer five years ago and asked him if he thought the curse still existed and if so, how to break it. His nephew wrote back that if any part of the curse was true, all of it would be. There was no way to break it, except death. We know that she suffered excruciating pain, and I believe that the screams begging 'Break it!' were for her death. She wrote the letter to you because she still owns the mirror. When the will is read it will be yours, so you must destroy it now before you are within its powers. Her life must have been very lonely, and, Jeanne, you are too young to follow in her footsteps. I'll go get a screwdriver."

Bill left Jeanne in the library with the letters. Without opening them she tossed them into the fire. The silly curse teased her imagination. Maud hadn't been lonely; she had her, Bill, and all of her other friends. They all loved her. She heard Bill climbing the stairs. His tread, muffled by the carpet, turned toward Maud's room.

Jeanne ran to stop him, but when she reached the door, it was standing open. In the room she found Bill standing before the mirror. Jeanne gasped. Bill's reflection was not the Bill beside her, but the Bill of thirty years ago. Quickly Jeanne grabbed a book-end and flung it at the mirror. Bill turned to her with a sick smile on his face and slumped to the floor.

Jeanne grabbed his arm as he fell, and from his hand slipped a piece of paper. It was a bill-of-sale. The mirror had actually been his, not Maud's.

MORNING DECISION

MARJORIE BURT

I awaken in the morning,
Bird song mingled with my dreams,
Like melting swirls of vapor
Interspersed with new sunbeams.
And a voice sings within me,
In what language none can say,
"Great things or small,
Soul's rise or fall,
Depend on you today."

If I rise with new-gained vigor,
Ready now to meet a foe,
And I hold faith as a banner,
For a sword God's truth I know;
Then it matters not how mighty
Are the ones I seek to slay;
Great things or small,
Soul's rise or fall,
Depend on me today.

If the troubles and the problems
Or the pain of yesterday
Blind me to the road before me,
That my feet know not the way,
Then I lose the new worlds proffered
By each rising sun's clear ray.
Great things or small,
Soul's rise or fall,
Depend on me today.

PHANTOMS

WANDA SMYTH

I walk under sunny skies
In a garden of magnolia and roses;
The robin announces the spring as He enters
And the flowers open to His touch.
Fear and uncertainty vanish
As he creates a sunny garden of happiness
With a smile and "I love you so."

But it is a make-believe garden
That feigns to look at reality.
A cloud now darkens the sky
The robin trembles and dies;
Magnolia and roses fade under the snow
His smile and "I love you so"
Are phantoms whispered by the wind
As it caresses the dead dreams
In a garden of long ago.

REMEMBRANCE

JANET BUSCHMANN

The naked poplar fronts the whining wind,
The persistent remembrance of days past
When brittle limbs were pregnant then with green.
Of days when breezes coaxed the timid buds
Into majestic submission of foliage.
Of days when Summer with its torrid hand
Yellowed the leaves into a shaft of gold.
Then soon the leaves, burnt brown and dry again,
Were crushed to dust beneath the feet of man.
And Winter with its heavy step stalked by
And struck the colored genius of the Spring.
But now the icy wind sounds weary tunes
And mocks no more the strong arboreal spire.
For upward stretch the branches toward the sky
As one who seeks for help to stop the pain.
And suddenly the wind gives up the fight,
Moves cautiously to rectify its sins.

EXCERPTS from the CORRESPONDENCE of the DEPARTMENT of DIPLOMATIC PROTOCOL, 1949

Edited by BRUCE BATES

March 19, 1949

Department of Diplomatic Protocol
1277 Pentagon Bldg.
Washington, D. C.
Dear Department:

Thank you very much for complying with my request by sending me Bulletin M-19960, "Diplomatic Language in Letters." The State Department has asked all us new emissaries to study this bulletin thoroughly before leaving on our assignments.

Six

I am writing in order to congratulate whoever compiled this beautiful bulletin. Sir, you are a genius. Yours is the model bulletin: clear instructions and concise information, set in aesthetically pleasing type and printed on the highest grade of paper. And the cover! C'est magnifique! Have you yet sent a copy to the Library of Congress? Delay no longer! Posterity must not be denied this paragon of journalism.

However, in spite of its universal excellence, there is one little detail concerning the particular catalogue you sent me which, if I may, I would call to your attention. Now, I am sure the average person would hardly even notice this little blemish, but I am a perfectionist, and my instinct of propriety received a cruel jar when, on reading your splendid circular a second time, I noticed that every other page was completely blank. I have pages one and three, but page two is blank; I have pages 365 and 367, but page 366 is gone. In view of this trivial mechanical oversight, I respectfully request another copy, "re-moulded nearer to my heart's desire."

Ever your servant,
SMEDLEY HONEYWELL
U. S. Department of State
Washington, D. C.

April 24, 1949

Mr. Smedley Honeywell
U. S. Department of State
Washington, D. C.
Dear Mr. Honeywell:
In Re: Bulletin M-19960

No doubt by the time you receive this letter you will have realized your error. It is generally felt in this department that the sort of impetuosity you exhibited is very unseemly in a man in your position (i.e., Ambassador to Turkistan), but the Department chooses to attribute it to youth and inexperience. We will not notify the State Department.

Although we feel we do not owe you an explanation, politeness demands that we explain nevertheless.

The bulletin you refer to (i.e., Bulletin M-19960) was issued in 1947. The fact that the presses were only printing the odd pages of the bulletin was not noticed until 288,631 copies had already been run off. It was obvious that all these booklets, perfect in all other respects, could not be merely thrown away. That would be wasteful.

The rest of the story is obvious. You should by now have received Bulletin M-19960-II. You will find that it is exactly the same as Bulletin M-19960, except that, instead of leaving every even page blank, we have left every odd page blank. The two bulletins are to be used in conjunction with each other.

Ever your servant,
Department of Diplomatic Protocol
1277 Pentagon Bldg.
Washington, D. C.

AUTUMN

HOWARD COOP

When summer goes and autumn comes
And hills begin to look as if
The God above had dipped into
Some multi-colored paint with His
Giant brush and carelessly slung it
And made of them a patchwork quilt.
It makes you think of by-gone days
When you were a child in school.

It makes a tingling in your spine.
It makes you long for days of youth
And friends you used to know. It makes
You want to sit beneath the shade
Of the oak tree that cooled your brow
On those hot summer days when you
Would run and play with kids at noon,
When you were a child in school.

It brings back thoughts of childhood friends
You used to know, but they have gone
And haunting memories now return.
It makes you want to take a stroll
And loaf beside the swimming hole
Where many happy hours were spent
On summer days, so hot and long,
When you were a child in school.

It brings back thoughts of by-gone days
That never shall return. Those days
You spent in school; the notes you slipped
To Mary, Sue, or Jane—the time
That you were caught; the happy hours
You spent with playmates in the yard
Or roaming in the woods at noon,
When you were a child in school.

You wonder where your friends have gone
That used to be around. There's John
And Jim—he always had a joke
To tell and make you laugh—and Joe,
Oh yes, and Jack; they were the gang
You used to know in by-gone days
When first you romped and played and laughed
When you were a child in school.

My eyes are dimmed as autumn comes.
My hair has turned a silver gray.
My friends are gone and I alone
Am left to watch the autumn come.
My friends are gone and things have changed
Since I was a child in school.

ON VISITING FAUST

GWEN JONES

A dreary fog lies heavy on the panes,
A mist descends upon the lonely room,
Vague shadows stretch their wiry fingers forth,
The atmosphere is one of dismal doom.

A sound!—A slow, monotonous, creaking hoise;
I cannot see—but—but wait! Look there!
My eyes are focused on a splotch of black,
The creaking stops; the calm I cannot bear.

I quickly strike a match to light the fire.
It blazes high, is hot upon my cheek,
An icy chill winds slowly up my spine;
I whirl around, some refuge hope to seek.

The flickering fire sends forth bright shafts of light.
That chill returns more icy than before,
For when my glance at last alights, I find
Two steel grey eyes have pierced me to the core.

A pale old man with hair as white as snow,
A shaggy beard, a face with furrows deep,
His eyes reveal a haunted, tortured soul;
To look on him would almost make one weep.

We fast became great friends. We talked of life.
He taught me things I thought I'd never know,
And yet his words, so strange, more weird than real,
Were given up along with grief and woe.

He had no faith, no hope, no dream, no prayer,
His weary shoulders bent with untold pain.
I tried to cheer him up, I shared my youth.
He smiled, and soon, I saw him smile again.

We talked for hours, his hand upon my arm,
He seemed to gather strength as time went by.
The clock struck one when I stood up to leave.
He wanted me to stay—I wondered why.

I turned the knob, looked back to say farewell.
That icy chill caressed my spine once more,
For, as I set my foot upon the snow,
A stranger passed me coming in the door.

I SAW YESTERDAY

WANDA SMYTH

I saw yesterday through the wide blue eyes of a little grey-haired old lady who fixed her big ones on me and solemnly declared that it was a bad world, today.

"Why, when I was growing up—."

Yes, Grandma, I know. Yours was a world when girls were wicked who went to square dances, where the greatest form of entertainment was going to church, when girls wore long underwear and ten petticoats. Yours was a man's world when, truly, men were men and women stayed home and raised the family of twelve and did the pioneering while the menfolk were out convincing the world that it was a man's world.

Yours was a dark world of no electricity and the time when it took all day to go down to the settlement for coffee and sugar. Remember, too, how you had to wash by hand over a tub of soapy suds? Remember the hard work of those days when you cooked all the long summer day over a wood range to feed a half-dozen work hands?

Tell me about the old time meetin's and Sunday schools, and the fun of quilting bees. Tell me about your friendly neighbors and the satisfaction of sitting around the fire on a cold winter night while the snow piled up outside and you knitted stockings and the children played guessing games.

Tell me about your pa hiding sides of meat in the cracks of the chimney during the Civil War, and about the glory of Teddy Roosevelt. Tell me about the days when women could not vote and the only respectable job for her was school teaching.

Yes, Grandma, but did you ever glide in a car through the countryside on a spring afternoon with the wind hitting your face and the gypsy in your soul almost bursting it wide open? Have you ever thought it would be fun to have breakfast in Chicago, lunch in New York, and then go dancing in Paris? Or don't you think it would be exciting to be governor like that lady down in Texas, or maybe ambassador to Shangri-la or Utopia?

You love your visions of yesterday, Grandma, and I love my dreams of tomorrow. But I say to you, as perhaps my granddaughter will one day say to me, thank goodness, I was born today!

I REMEMBER

WILLIAM GREYNOLDS

I remember, I remember well,
The glorious days of my youth,
When earth and sky and all things
In between were mine.

I remember mornings in June, slow and golden
The crystal moist stillness of the early dawn,
When the dewdrops fought the new sun for glory,
And did a twinkling, scintillating death,
Diamonds burnt on the altar of day.

I remember the soft misty green of new leaves,
So delicate they floated on sunbeams,
And danced to birds' songs.

I remember climbing a hill in the soft
Shade of late afternoon,
To a cliff where I knew
The columbine was waiting,
Tossing her red and yellow head in the breeze,
Laughing and beckoning to me.

I remember days of dreamy beauty,
When time ebbed and was not,
The hot torpor of a summer afternoon,
In which I waited lost in immobility,
The dimension of forever.

I remember I found God one spring day.
His touch was soft and sweet
as he came down the valley,
playing with the trees.
I stood and waited.
He caressed the sweet william
that carpeted the hillside and
brought its elusive sweetness to me.
Then first I prayed a clumsy child's
prayer, and the wind touched me gently
And I knew that God was there.

FRUSTRATION

BETTY JIM ROSS

The smoke from my cigarette curled around and around—swirling eddies of angel hair. It was as love's path, strong at first, then growing dim and passing into the dark abyss of time. Yes, I found comfort in the opaque loneliness of my ceiling. It seemed to be chiding me, "Listen to your records there in the dark, talk to the leaping fire in your grate, for your beloved is far away and needs you no longer."

It was true that I had found the perfect love. Yet, where was my lover? Are you listening? It had been so long since I had seen you, and I wanted you so badly. Every evening I would sit here waiting for you. My life was meaningless. Do you remember this:

I miss you so—
I look for you in
Places only I have
Been before.

I hear a melody we heard—
And my half suppressed
Sigh is the only omen of
The inner tears I shed.

Once again my mind went flying across the mountain tops of thought, and settled on our day—spent by the sea, and in the mountains.

I was late and I began to run. I ran on—and as I looked up into the rocks where I knew you would be—my heart rose—and new strength was mine. I felt that you were watching me, and once when I fell in the sand, I blushed a little for fear you would think me awkward. As I neared the path I saw you standing behind the big boulder. You remember, the one where we used to sunbathe. And you were smiling and looking at me with those wonderfully deep and sensitive eyes. I started to wave but decided to pretend I didn't see you—suppose I wanted to act surprised. The wind was blowing fiercely in your hair, and you looked so desirable. As I reached the top of the path you called out, "Hello, my darling!" I didn't reply, just walked over and took you in my arms. I didn't kiss you at first—this moment was too sweet and poignant. Taking my hand, you led me up among the pines. Do you remember the mare and foal we saw on that beautiful little mesa—the one where our cabin was to have been—and how wisely they looked at us when we whistled? I wasn't amazed because they didn't start when you laughed. Your laughter was so happy, so pure—like a chapel bell echoing through a valley. There was so much love in it—and you always made me so proud, for people couldn't help being drawn to you when you laughed. You wore my love well. I was so happy that day—being up there with you. Up high, where the symphony of the singing winds was the music set to our love. The climbing began to tire you, and we lay down to rest in the grass of a sun-blessed lea. You cradled your head on my chest, and as I kissed your brow, your eyes slowly closed—and you were asleep. Once I held my breath so that my breathing might be in time with yours. You stirred once, and I kissed your nose, and you smiled. My arm began to ache, and I kissed you hard on the lips and slowly you began to awaken. . . .

I can't help smiling at how we whispered endearments when we were miles from anyone else. The clouds began to bank and grow dark, and we arose from our lethargy and raced each other down—down to reality.

And the smoke curled around and around. And my sob was heard only by the pregnant silence—waiting to burst, and be flung out, and to reach for you, and return you to your home—my arms.

It was madness to believe that you would come to me. Then I felt your hands on my shoulders. The huntingly beautiful musk of your body intoxicated me beyond measure and I was unable to reason clearly. We found each other's arms and I held you very close—so close I was afraid that I might hurt you. I traced your lips with my fingertips, and you kissed my hand so gently I hardly knew it. Silently I sought your mouth, and—you were gone.

CONCLUSIONS IN THE DUST

THOM McELFRESH

I

Lament

A prouder flag—nobility
unborn, unflown—
Lies in the hollows of my heart.
Its pennant pattern, form, design
Lies in my bold desire.

The strength to hold it
firm, erect,
Lies not.

II

Three Voices

Away to the hills
The white-gold hills
That rise in the sun
From the green-gold valley.

Sing, "Hi to the hills,
And hi to the lonely oak
That surmounts that hill
And binds it up to the cloudy sky,"
For you are home.

A dirt-gold road
That winds that hill
And stops beneath that oak
And doesn't go on,
Because there isn't any place to go,
For you are home.

*And where, my friend, are you
At the end of that dirt-gold road?
Or does it matter to you
—For you are home—
That you aren't anywhere,
And there isn't anywhere to go?*

"At the end of a road
On the top of a hill
With a lonely oak to sing in the wind
The lonely wind."

"For I am home—
And it doesn't matter where it is
And you don't need a reason
For being there,
For being home."

"For home, like beauty, is its own excuse."

III

January 22, Thursday

I sit in my window and look
with little pleasure at the world before me.
And what I see is of little good
for anything to anyone.

The sky is a sort of bitter gray
and the wind blows
In fitful little guests
about the corners of my soul.

The trees are naked, black
Against the somber sky.

There is nothing good or bright
in the world before me;
And there is no returning to what was right
and good and happy.

This day will end, I know,
for God is good;
And things unwanted end in time,
for God is also kind.

Belles Lettres

*Eastern Kentucky
State College*

AUTUMN 1953



Belles Lettres

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FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, take pride in presenting this, the first issue of our twentieth volume.

the sun in jeopardy

THOM McELFRESH

There was a small Christmas tree on the table. I hadn't noticed it before. In the darkness the flashing sign across the street caught red and green sparkles in the tinsel and burnished them in tiny flames.

The room was cold. A silent barren chill lay across the shadowed floor. They—those simple complements of the man's life—stood frozen in some strange tableau. The sound of the brittle December wind rattling in the windows accented the coldness of the room.

I shivered and thought of the warmth of other places—home, a subway, a theatre lobby where a billboard advertised his play, *The Sun in Jeopardy*.

Then I realized that this was the last time I would ever see the study like this—with the spirit still there. By tomorrow the place will have been defiled by the investigators seeking the cause of a routine suicide.

The note caught my eye. It was lying pale against the dark green desk blotter. Addressed to me. Simple.

Ken

Whatever you do, remember that there is only one time—now. The past is gone and will be forgotten. The future is cold and forbidding. I couldn't take today. I was weak. Ken, forgive me. And tell Julie, tell her this.

Tim

I lighted a cigarette and threw the burnt-out match into the cold ashes in the fireplace. Someone passed along the corridor outside the door, footsteps drumming into the worn carpet.

This had been the center of Tim's life. The study with its drama collection, the worn furniture, the broad desk. Without its usual clutter the desk seemed naked and sorrowing in the darkness.

The note still lay on the blotter. I had not yet touched it. All that Tim had been and had believed was there in those simple words. And I knew that no one should ever read it but me. In alien hands it would have been an outrage, for in it Tim had poured out the last of his heart.

He knew and had taught me that there is no time like the present, although the world is full of innocent bystanders—those who look back at the good old days, and those who look forward to a bright and shiny better day to come. They are blind to the now.

In the breathless, chilled hush of his deserted study I saw his life end as he finally put into words what he had always believed but had never dared to write.

Tim had known and had hated himself for knowing, for it was a knowing sickened with regret. As he realized that the now is the only important time, he also realized that he was without the strength to grasp that time and live it to its worth. And it broke his heart to see the now drift by untouched or barely touched by him.

His plays had spoken only part of it. *The Sun in Jeopardy* had come closest. He made his characters feel as he wished to feel and speak as he died to speak, but within himself he feared. And no man can live with a broken and fearing heart.

The audience was applauding for the fourth curtain call in the warm theatre down the street as I burned the note. A stem of blue smoke rose from the ash tray, twisting into the chilled air.

OCTOBER FIRE

E. M. AGUINALDO

October flames upon the hill
Where tree leaves burn against the sky,
And sparks from sumach torches spill
In every path that they blaze by.

Burn slower, autumn, yes, burn slow!
Too soon your fire will sink to ember,
Too soon the last, bright flickers glow,
And sink to ashes of December.

MY SOUL AND THE SEA

BETTY BRETT OGDEN

I walked alone one dreary night;
My soul was seeking peace and light.
I walked along a lonely shore
And beheld the ocean there once more.

The moon had risen o'er the sea
And lit a pathway just for me.
Somehow as I looked at that great sea,
My heart was filled with peace—and glee.

For the waves roll in and the waves roll out
As on and on they go
With perfect rhythm—perfect time—
Never fast—never slow.

Seasons come and seasons go—
War and peace; sun and snow;
Day and night; love and hate.
None can change the ocean great.

Oh, if my soul could only be
Strong and bold as that great sea,
Fixed upon the Rock that's strong—
My soul would sing this song:

For the waves roll in, and the waves roll out
As on and on they go
With perfect rhythm, perfect time,
Never fast—never slow.

EMOTION

WALLACE SULLIVAN

A thing so great it brings the tears,
Along with thoughts of by-gone years.
Hidden deep within one's heart,
With love, even hate it cannot part.
It grows and grows with each new phase,
Until it bursts in jumbled maze.
A thing so lovely, and yet so sad,
It brings out good but also bad.
It blocks the mind, it tears the heart,
And pierces the body like a dart.
A light may go out, wind subside;
But emotion will in you abide.

IL PENSEROSO

MARY ELIZABETH JOHNSON

Genii of rest and pensiveness
Bring twilight's touch of quietness.
In solitude and silence steep
The "me" that will forever keep
The memories of a child's soft coo,
Or kind, true friends that are so few,
Or words but whispered to the air,
That were so sweet when in my ear.
This vesper hour, oh, let me hear
In memory a hymn so dear
As never sung by earthly man,
But played on harp with peace and plan
That quiets trouble, quickens thought
To all good things which God hath wrought.
Then place me in a sphere of blue,
Blue sky, blue grass, and clear blue dew,
Surround me with a clean close smell,
Lilacs of spring. Then let me dwell
On work completed, just some small task.
Then I shall sleep. No more I'll ask.
Genii, if all these works you'll do,
I will forever live with you.

THOUGHTS ON A WINTER'S DAY

ROSALYN RUSSELL

I watch the snow fall from the heaven's gray,
And wonder as it piles in drifts of white
What peace it holds! The promise that some day
O'er all the world the glow of freedom's light
Will pierce our hearts, and we shall live in peace.
But as the beauty of the snow soon dies
The lovely thoughts within my heart all cease,
And I can see the ground on which it lies
As something ugly—to despise and hate,
Not as it really is—a promise too,
That there will come a day, as sure as Fate,
When flowers, and grass, and hearts will live anew.
But life is so involved in haste and duty,
Who dares to see in things around us beauty?

A DRINK OF SHADES

ALICIA MCCORD

Sleep, image of death,
I love thee, for thou dost cloak my sorrows.
Thy still peace bringeth relief from worldly care.
Thou art moral drunkenness, my friend.
And from thee I shall rise anew, readied to take up
old and new strifes.
I rise rested from thy limbo.

THE COME-BACK

MARY JO CAMPBELL

"Dave said she looks terrible," Janet said. "He saw her at the movie by herself the other night."

"By herself!" Anne seemed shocked. "First time I ever heard of Joyce Parker going somewhere by herself! She must be in bad shape."

"Well," said Joanne in her customary calm way, "I suppose if I had been in a bad automobile accident and my face was scarred, I'd be a little shy about seeing all my old friends again, too. I think she'll be all right when she finds out that we don't care how she looks. She'll still be the same old Joy."

"I wonder when she's going to come out of hiding," said Anne.

"Pretty soon, I hope," replied Janet untactfully; "I'm getting curious to see what she looks like."

"Well, you'll get your wish this afternoon," Joanne said sharply. "I talked to her mother this morning and told her we would be glad to meet Joy here this afternoon. She said Joy had just about gotten up enough courage to come downtown."

"So that's why you called us down here!" Janet exclaimed. "But why did you pick this place—you know the whole gang is here every afternoon about this time."

"I thought she might as well find out that no one is against her just because she isn't as pretty as she used to be."

Anne suddenly looked out the plate glass window of the drugstore. "Don't anybody look now," she said. "She's crossing the street."

"What will we say to her?" Janet asked nervously.

"I don't know," Joanne replied calmly. "It will all depend on how she acts toward us. Please don't anybody look shocked."

The three girls suddenly began to drink their cokes as if they hadn't had a drink in a month.

Joyce Parker walked into the crowded drugstore and spoke shyly to a few surprised boys seated at the soda-fountain, who responded as best they could. Her face was scarred, but not as much as the girls had expected. To one who had never seen the girl, she might appear almost normal. But to the people she had known all her life, she looked very different. From the way she walked over to the girls' table, they could tell she had changed inwardly, too. It would take a lot of courage for her to become the smiling, happy, carefree Joy again—a lot of courage and a lot of patience to become the popular, confident girl she had been before the terrible accident.

Now she walked up to the table quickly, as if she wanted to get the ordeal over with as quickly as possible.

"Hi, girls," was all she could say.

"Hello, Joy," Janet replied nervously.

"Welcome back, Joy," Joanne said sincerely.

"Pull up a chair," invited Anne. "We were beginning to wonder if you had forgotten us."

"No, I hadn't forgotten you," Joy said cuttingly. "Mother has reminded me a dozen times that I had to meet you today."

"Well, I like that," Anne began thoughtlessly. "What are we, social outcasts or something?" As soon as the words were out, she knew she shouldn't have said them.

"No, but *I* am," Joy said defiantly, as if daring them to deny it.

No one said anything. Again the girls drank their cokes as if they were dying of thirst.

Joanne broke the embarrassing silence. "You're no different than you

ever were, Joy, unless you make yourself different by always reminding people of your—accident.”

Joy was immediately sorry that she had spoken so rashly. “I know you’re right, Joanne, but I just can’t—”

“Don’t say another word, Joy. We know how you must feel, but please don’t make us unhappy, and please wait to pass judgment on yourself until you see how glad everyone will be to see you again.”

The gang was beginning to drift into the already crowded drugstore, and gradually several of the boys drifted over to the table. Finally the whole gang was crowded around the table, welcoming Joy back. Joanne could have kissed them every one for being so nice.

“Hi, Joy! Good to see you back! How do you feel, kid?”

“Long time no see, Joy! Going to the party tonight?”

“Well, look who’s back! Life begins again!”

Joy, at first embarrassed and painfully self-conscious, began to talk and joke with the boys as she had always done. Soon she lost herself in conversation with the gang, and was asking one question after another, trying to catch up on the events of the last three months that she had missed. She laughed and soon everyone else laughed. The gang was happy to have her back, and she was glad to be back.

Joanne got up from the crowded table, unnoticed. She walked back to the telephone booths and dialed a number.

“Hello, Mrs. Parker. This is Joanne. You don’t have a thing to worry about, Mrs. Parker. Joy is just the same as she’s always been—right in the middle of a crowd.”

LONGING

JEANETTE SOWDERS

Last night I dreamed of you,
And days when our love was new . . .
Of happy moments past . . .
Of days when I saw you last.

Last night I relived our love
And walked again on skies above.
I sang with the heavenly host
Of you, the one I love most.

Till morning light broke through
I peacefully dreamed of you . . .
But with morning reality came
And I knew things weren’t the same,

For you, my love, are far away
And every dew drop seems to say,
‘He left—gone—forever—
No use to hope—whatever.’

And so the dream is burst,
But still for you I thirst.
Please, my darling—return to me.
Return in answer to my last plea.

Yet a few days I may linger . . .
Then I’ll be a heavenly singer.
Till you come, I’ll pray heaven above.
Come back—come back—my love!

SUDDEN RECOGNITION IN PSYCHOLOGY CLASS

G. H. W.

Sing me no sad songs,
Tell me no sad tales,
For I have seen the light,
The shaft of recognition whizzing through the darkness
of misunderstanding and doubt.
I have seen
that I am in love with love itself.
And I am sad.

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

WANDA SMYTH

There's so much I must do today.
The ironing lies unsprinkled
On the old couch with dust beneath;
The weeds have stifled the petunies;
The yard high with leaves is heaped.

There are dishes in the kitchen sink
And the beds must be made by nine,
Potatoes need diggin' and peas pickin',
Dinner must be right on time.

Gee, there's so much to do.
Aunt Susie to write; a new book
To read if I keep up with the times;
But first, first I'll just:

... sit here on the porch
And wiggle my bare toes in the sand;
And listen to the ringing symphony
Of the wind in the maples.

I'll watch the tiny wisps of fluff
Wander aimlessly across the sky;
I'll get lost in the space ship
Of the burning bright bowl of the sun.

I'll tour from flower to flower
On the energetic wings of the butterfly.
I'll taste the sticky sweet honey
And make love to the leopard lily.

I'll forget the dinner, the ironin',
The letter to Aunt Susie, the kitchen sink;
I'll fly off now with the bumble bee—
Huh? Yes, Mother, just a minute—

MY LOVE

ANONYMOUS

Tonight, the moon is full, my love—
Tonight on this fall evening
As it shines bright above
And through the clouds it's weaving.

Tonight, the moon is full, my love,
As on that night last spring.
But now you do not want me—No!
"TO BE ALONE," I sing.

Tonight, the moon is full, my love,
As it pales from its orange hue.
Though you are now with someone else
For me there'll be no one but you.

Tonight, the moon is full, my love;
It's here for us to share.
I wish you would come back to me
And show me that you care.

AFTER THE GAME

G. H. WOLFFORD

"What a nice sunny Saturday afternoon," Joan thought as she put the finishing touches on one of her hardest subject papers. But this paper hadn't bothered Joan one bit, for she was going to be with Rod tonight. Out of an orange-colored sky he had come along after math class that morning and asked her to go to the big football game with St. Mary's, and to top it off, the dance that followed. It wasn't one of the more important games, but Joan had been surprised—almost shocked—when she learned Rod wasn't taking Betty to the first home game of the season. Later, by a discreet inquiry, she found out there had been a little spat between the two; and it was the first time they had broken up in the two years of courtship. Yes, Joan was anticipating a wonderful evening.

"Okay, boys, knock it off," were Coach Bronson's orders to the team as they came off the field after preparing for the game.

Jack was anxious for the long hours of waiting to pass, waiting to trounce St. Mary's in the first home game of his college career. The other members of the squad were in just about the same frame of mind that he was, and the whole stadium rocked with their loud rollicking. The cold shower was invigorating, and the team spirit was overwhelming as the squad passed outside in groups of two's and three's. It was only another casual statement that Jack made—"Boy, won't this be a great night for a football game!"

Almost everyone was agreed on one fact—the weather and temperament of the day. All the teachers were glad to see that last class go, and the pupils twice as glad. Everyone was burning with the anxiety of the first home game. All the way down the line they agreed, even now as President O'Connell is telling Pap, the night watchman, what he thinks of the day and predicts for the night. Pap, in his own deliberate "wait and see" manner, is the only one on the campus who won't predict beautiful weather for the weekend.

When the hour of eight had arrived, and Rod had not come, Joan, worried and wondering where he could be, wandered over from Durham hall to Lane Stadium. She had little interest in the football game, and her roving eye finally caught sight of Rod—and Betty!

"Oh dear! What had happened? This is the end of a perfectly lovely evening!"

These and several other thoughts were erased by a roar from the crowd. An injured player was being taken from the field, and a sub going in for him. Her heart jumped as she recognized the new player as the boy who sat near her in English class, and she almost groaned as he was taken out after only two plays, for Jack had had little time to prove his ability as a player.

Jack felt miserable. Here they were, with only seconds to go, and behind 10-0. Although Warhead was putting on a gallant stand, it seemed evident that they were beaten. When the final gun sounded, Warhead was in possession of the ball, and with only eight yards to go.

"What a crummy night," Jack mumbled, as he dragged himself back toward the dressing room. "What else *could* happen?"

Just then the first drop of rain fell.

He was feeling worse as he walked into the Student Union Building.

"Could *anyone* else feel so bad?" A soft voice awoke him from his mournful dream. "You played very well tonight, for what time you were in."

He looked up to see that Joan was the soothing influence on his troubled mind. During the course of events, Jack and Joan got to know each other as well as two young people can get acquainted in two short hours.

After the Student Union Building clock had chimed midnight and the doors of Durham Hall had closed, Jack walked whistling back to his dorm, to dream. Old Pap, the night watchman, who seemed to see and know all that went on, chuckled to his lone companion, a small dog.

"Turned out to be a pretty fair night after all, huh, Crackerjack?"

A MODERN BALLAD

MARY ELIZABETH JOHNSON

The farmer's son was strong and bold,
Black hair and eyes of blue.
The merchant's son was oh so smart.
He had some money too.

Now enters the sweet maiden fair.
Brown eyed, her name was Anne.
Her step was light and fairylike.
Her ring on lily hand.

The farmer's and the merchant's son,
She knew them both quite well.
She tried to make her mind up fair,
But which she could not tell.

Much good advice was given Anne
By family. The kin
Would sit and talk of poor Anne's beaux.
They liked both Bill and Ben.

Ben was the merchant's pride and joy.
The farmer's son was Bill.
They both did vow for her they'd die,
For Anne they'd even kill.

In olden days the simple way
For this sad song to end
Would be for our dear Anne to die,
And Bill would soon kill Ben.

But in this modern day and age,
Anne stopped her fear and sob;
She made her mind up, quick and fast,
And ran away with Bob.

INTERLUDE

WANDA SMYTH

The air is still and cold. A strange moon, a golden lonely moon shines through the soft azure curtain upon a silent countryside. It is a lonely moon that loses its starry companions in the deep deep navy of the sky and the shifting of the clouds.

A light frost covers the crisp grass and catches the wan light from the sky. The hills stretch far away as dark centurions who guard the valley against the changes of man and progress. They are the foreboding of ill will to the stranger who does not know and understand their strange beauty. To the child of them, the lonely hills call as quicksand of the marsh—they call, and promise to solace and comfort.

The owl is heard breaking the silence from the depths of the nearby trees while a few solitary lights beacon from the distance.

There is a feeling about the scene, a feeling of timelessness, as if before your eyes the centuries were walking past and you were lost—a small, small flake of soon-to-melt snow in the intricate pattern of God's eternity. And, yet, you, as the snow flake, have a design, a beautiful pattern that is unlike all others. So you gaze into the vastness of the heavens and are caught into the feeling of bodilessness, as if you stood above and out of the earth, alone with the strange moon and the glittering stars—alone, and unafraid. And, then, a light breeze quivers through the trees and the distant lights seem to flicker. A chill runs through you and, suddenly, the spell is broken; the magic is gone. You stand under only a cold, night sky watching a pale moon and unsure stars.

Yet, it is with a strange new strength that you turn away from your interlude with eternity.

FIRESIDE DREAMER

(FOR AILENE)

DONNA MINCEY

O light before my hearth,
Where red fire is leaping,
It's eery shadows,
Shadows slowly leaping,
You are no more to my woman
Who lies sleeping.

Flicker on, bright fire,
Hear not my weeping,
Burn thou not near a grave
Where red roses slow are creeping,
And embers now, destroy not the grass
Beneath which my woman still lies sleeping.

Cool white ashes now,
No more alight,
Shed no more warmth
Through my window panes at night.
Sleep now, my woman, and this fire,
Both once so warm and bright.

O little dreamer that I am,
I sit alone this night
At a hearth no longer tended
By a woman gay and bright,
And an empty hearth betrays
An empty heart.
Fireside dreamer!!
With dreams no more gay and light.

ON APPLYING FOR A JOB

BRUCE BATES

I admit—I am overly self-conscious when applying for a job. There is something about a waiting room, where everyone is wishing failure on everyone else, that makes my nerves worm out through my epidermis and quiver at a rate of several thousand vibrations per second. My soul-fellowship with the condemned felon waiting in his cell the night before the execution has caused me to oppose capital punishment. These people in the waiting room are invariably and unanimously of Olympian mold. I pale to near-invisibility.

My references take on the aspect of a Belgian neutrality treaty. When at last it is my turn to be interviewed, my general appearance is that of a heroin addict suffering withdrawal symptoms.

Why is it that the job interviewer always looks like a sadistic dentist? These people have missed their calling. Six hundred years ago they would have been Keepers of the Keys, or the man at the helm of an infidel-stretching machine.

The man smiles, displaying row upon row of unnaturally sharp teeth. "What is your social security number?" he asks.

By some intuitive process this fiend has singled out my weak spot. I resolve to go immediately and have my social security number, my draft number, and my automobile license number tattooed on the sole of my left foot. My chances are ruined. By the time I can return with the number the job will be taken. Without a word I pick up my unopened sheaf of references and make for the door.

"Wait!" he cries, and a wave of relief sweeps over me. This great heart, this god-on-earth, this fulfillment of the promise of civilization, he is going to give me another chance! Joyfully I turn back.

He smiles half-apologetically—and says, "As you go, would you tell the next applicant I will see him now?"

THERE IS

ALICIA McCHORD

Who has ever heard of a sun-lit star?

There is such a thing!

There are ruby chandeliers and beneath—

flaming hair with crystal tears rushing from jagged eyes.

There are tree boughs that enfold and near—

waterfalls that sing and are filled with sparkling emeralds—
the only sound, a croak!

There are such things.

There is love and hate, and

love and jealousy, and

love and respite, and

love and weariness, and

love and despair.

But mostly there is love—there must be!

For is there not a sky!

Are there no sweet tender blades of grass!

Is there no ground on which to walk!

And are there no feet with which to walk!

There are, for there are you—and I—and God.

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FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of **BELLES LETTRES**, take pride in presenting this, the second issue of our twentieth volume.

THE LADY OF THE LAWN

H. E. RICHARDSON

I saw the woman in the afternoon
Walking on her lovely lawn
Between the early fallen leaves of September,
Watering her shrubbery.

The sun was bright in my eyes, but
I saw her,
Caught her eye in the glinting
And threw up my hand.
The day was so lovely—and—

She turned
Her dull, unfriendly back to me,
And watered the shrubbery
In the shadows of her house.

Was it some pain that made her turn away?
Was it a fear, or hating
Or sickness unabating
I never knew about, or
Did she care more for
The watering of her shrubbery in September?

There was a disappointment
That was sent with her strange torment
To me, and killed the gladness of the day,
And something was lost there forever.
O, she saw. She saw me I know,

And turned away from me
To see . . .
The wall, the webs, the mud around her shrubs.

Lady on the lawn,
Watering your lawn,
I wanted to call
To make you see; to shout: *When
Ten thousand years from now God's rain will fall,
And his plant will grow,
O, who will smile, or speak, or know—
Who will know us then?*

SONNET OF SPRING

ADA RUTH TAULBEE

The breeze of Spring whispered her coaxing words,
As she tripped merrily from winter's bed,
To all the little flowers and the birds:
"Awake my friends! I'm here! Let fly your dread!
No more you need to fear the chilling wind;
No more the fleecy snow will on you fall;
No more by icy rains your blood is thinned.
So come, let's join our spirits at a ball."
The birds with music all the air will fill;
All flowers who were sleeping in the earth,
As gaily clad as is the daffodil,
Will join the ball all filled with Springtime mirth.
Let every heart help celebrate this day,
For truly, Spring has come and come to stay.

LATE SUMMER

MARY JO CAMPBELL

The day was one of those hot, humid ones which come so unexpectedly in early September, just when summer seems to be gone. It was as if summer, saying goodbye for another year, had planned this day in order to leave behind a vivid impression of heat, moisture, and laziness.

The little boy scooted his bare, deeply tanned feet over the thick rug on the living-room floor and pushed the screen door leading to the porch open with one sweaty hand. The door banged loudly when he let it slam behind him.

The boards of the porch floor were hot under his feet. He walked a little more quickly over to the porch railing and swung his short legs slowly over it. He sat stooped forward on the railing, feet braced against the bottom rail, elbows on his knees.

The little boy sat on the porch railing of a farmhouse which was situated on a hill which was high enough to give a view, from the house, of the surrounding fields, and still low enough to seem close to these fields.

The sun blazed down on his body, and tiny beads of perspiration began to collect on his face. A trickle of sweat, running from the base of his neck down his backbone, felt like an insect crawling down his back.

When he looked up at the sun, he saw a rounded splotch of white heat against a deep blue sky. When he looked away from the blinding sight, he could see dark blue spots before his eyes.

The little boy took a sip of the lemonade from the glass he held, noticing that the once large cubes of ice in the glass had melted until they were but oval-shaped pebbles floating on the top of the liquid. He swallowed the last of the lemonade and rolled the tiny balls of ice over his tongue until they melted. Moving the tip of his tongue over his upper lip in order to savor the last of the cool drink, he tasted the salty perspiration which ran down his face and collected above his lip.

He glanced dreamily at the line of far-away hills stretched across the horizon and let his gaze wander across the hillsides, which were strangely blurred from his sight by a trembling, hazy wave of heat rising from the hot earth like steam from a boiling pan of water. A gigantic puff of white clouds billowed like smoke from behind the horizon somewhere, as if the scorching earth were burning far off in the distance.

Far off, the little boy could make out the lazy tinkle of a cowbell, and the sound of an automobile horn in the distance came only as a sleepy hum. He could hear no other sound, not even the song of a bird. It was as if the stifling air had silenced everything and driven every living thing to the cool shade of a tree, out of sight and out of hearing. The leaves on the nearby trees hung limp, but ready to be stirred by the slightest breath of air, if it were to come.

Directly in front of the little boy, down the hill, was a large field in which piles of hay lay in patches. At one end of the field, half a dozen men were pitching hay from the bristling, dry mounds in the field into a wagon drawn by two steaming, sweating, tired horses.

The little boy watched the men, seeing them as tiny miniatures of themselves, sweating and straining in the sun. They bent their backs almost in unison, jabbed their long pitchforks into a diminishing stack of hay, straightened, and jerked the forkfuls of hay so that the hay seemed to almost fly the two or three feet into the wagon. The men made these motions rhythmically for several minutes and then, one by one, stretched their cramped, aching, sticky bodies, wiped their grimy forearms over their sweating brows, and leaned on their pitchforks for a moment's rest.

One or two of the men glanced at the sun hopefully, but, seeing it could not be more than one o'clock, began the process of scooping hay into the wagon again. The rest of the men sat down on the parched ground and leaned gratefully against the hard wagon wheels. Then, slowly, they forced

themselves to get up and go back to the monotonous bend, scoop, throw, bend, scoop, throw, of their job.

Perching comfortably on the porch railing, the little boy watched the men work for a few minutes, then swung his legs back over the railing onto the porch, and lazily shuffled back into the house for another glass of lemonade.

AT BREAK OF MORNING

JANE PAYTON

The first faint sigh of morning moves across the sky. A bird's clear trill breaks the stillness. The lake is still, too.

As you walk slowly through the meadow, you stop to examine the green blades of grass, each one with its own burden, a tiny dewdrop.

You climb to the top of a small rise and seat yourself on the uncomfortable coldness of a flat rock. You raise your eyes to the gigantic mountains that surround you, magnificent but rocky, pointing their strong spires to the deep blue sky.

You hear a loud, smacking splash and you turn quickly to see ripples widening into larger circles. There is another splash and this time you see a flash of brilliant scarlet twist above the water for a split second before disappearing into the icy blue-green depths. The lake is now fully covered with rings, but soon is calm again.

The sun has reached you now, and you can feel its friendly warmth touch your face. There's a sassy little chipmunk blinking his beady eyes at you from a safe distance. You find a forgotten peanut in your pocket and throw it to him. When he is finished nibbling on it, he flashes his little tail up in quick thank-you and scurries away to be about his morning's business.

You feel wonderfully free and happy. You want to sing at the top of your voice, to leap up the mountainside, or to run plunging into the cold water of the lake to swim like a fish. Your heart and mind are overflowing with the wild beauty and splendor of the scenes just witnessed.

Suddenly a human voice is heard calling, "Hurry up with the firewood! What's keeping you? We're starving!" You are brought back to earth with a jolt and you hurriedly start looking for pieces of wood for the fire. Still, the wonderful feeling is not completely lost, and awhile later with a load of wood in your arms, you stand looking toward the mountains, reliving the wondrous, awe-inspiring spectacle. Then, turning, you walk slowly back to camp.

QUIETUDE

JOAN SCHOLLE

I like the quiet after a storm.
The clear, rain-washed morning
Is like a silent prayer of gratitude
After the bombastic cannoning of Thor.

The rain-soaked branches bow their heads
As the morning sun pronounces the benediction.
The grateful flowers raise their heads
And bask in the warmth of its rays.

At last the spell is broken.
The birds begin their ceaseless chatter.
The sounds of the city swell to a great crescendo
And the silence that was, is gone.

KALEIDOSCOPE

RUTH HULKER

Skates.

Whirling and spinning against tortured sidewalks,
Singing a song that sounds like Spring,
Yet it is a song like no other in the world.
Children's voices—leaping, strident
Create an inimitable, eternal melody;
Hopscotch, a neat and geometric pattern;
Skip rope, a swing and ageless rhythm.

I am not a singer;

I am not a musician.

Yet I would like to sing this song again
With the magic, the freshness, the innocent sadness,
and a glory never repeated.
Trying to touch branches,
Stepping over cracks in sidewalks to avoid a maternal
tragedy,
Wading in rainy gutters,
Struggling with snowsuits,
Preoccupation with marbles and a ring of dust—
Are things I can repeat, and do again,
But not to the same tune.

IT WILL LEAVE

WANDA SMYTH

It will leave—

That feeling of bitterness and sweetness;
A mysterious magic that intoxicates;
The whisper of a world never embraced.

It will fade and disappear

As a fog under summer sun
Evaporates from mist into—nothing.
I need not think or be melancholy
Because I have stood here before
Not dreaming, but sad, knowing I
Dare not.

Smile, my dear, and keep your eyes

Bravely, firmly away from the little Memories—
The way the honeysuckle perfumed the air;
The words—unimportant words—over coffee;
A butterfly on your shoulder,
Flying carelessly as the dreams
Of someone I know.

Smile, my dear, keep your eyes

On the sun, the shadows you find not there.
Hear the melody of a new song.
Learn a new language, that of no return.
It will leave as before, you know.
But for this moment in eternity,
I confess, I do love you so.

“COME LIVE WITH ME”

(NEW STYLE)

With great distress your voice I hear,
Unlike fond dream which I hold dear.
True love is not feeble minded.
But for the sane and so inclined.

Ere sets the sun this day is done,
And maids who tarry to be won
May rue the day proposal hied,
For time can never be denied.

Begin today your place to make;
Old hags do rare of bliss partake.
So if perchance more of you thought,
Come live with me and be my love.

'Tis sad but true the seasons change,
Yet those who live their sleep must claim.
To wake anon and start afresh
Is act for those whom God has blest.

Life without aim holds nought but woe,
Your future safe within I'll hold.
Mere words will not this problem solve;
Come live with me and be my love.

L'ALLEGRO

MARY ELIZABETH JOHNSON

O elf of mystery, sprite of song,
Come skip to me, for you I long.
With lights that show the pulse of night,
With sounds that dance to rhythms bright,
With crowds of folks and one best friend,
With spangled sky and crisp clear wind,
With thoughts of “now” this hour I'm free.
O elf and sprite with these thrill me.

A dress of red I hope might flatter,
But take away that serious matter,
Then let me hear the trumpet climb
To form a scale that is sublime.
My wish for these I now express,
For these will bring me happiness.
It's rush and whirl that I enjoy
And joke and prank by girl or boy.
Not fun that comes by pure creation
Nor laughter by an invitation,
But love of life, and lives of giving,
And lives just filled with love of living.

O elf and sprite, give these to me,
And I will ever worship thee.

THE WIND OF LIFE

JEAN H. BELL

The wind of life is passing me.
It shouts as it goes by.
The wind of life is passing me.
Listen! Do you hear its cry?

I would not listen to its tales
Of what my life could be.
No! I would not listen,
And so the wind passed me.

Now that my life is over
And the past is dead despair.
I think of the silent wind
Whose voice I would not hear.

A DROP OF LIFE

DON SCHAEFER

She was there in the same booth, in the same drugstore where we had had our coffee many times together. It was the morning after graduation, and the big bold hands of the clock behind the soda fountain announced to all eyes that it was 10 o'clock. I first noted her tan knitted dress as it folded from her form; her shoulders cringed around her head against the red leather-backed booth; and she leaned back from the black sounding board in this position with her hands consoling each other. Everything seemed the same—or was it? The same people were doing their same insignificant chores, but they seemed less void to my senses than they had ever before. As I approached, her radiance enveloped the atmosphere as her brown beaming eyes emitted glittering silver rays that overflowed into all the room and ebbed back, becoming more intense as I—with measured steps—drew nearer. I knew then that these four years of college life had not wet down the purity and goodness that she possessed.

However, as I sat down across from her, the dampness was there as we sat, mutely becoming preoccupied—with each other and the future. Rain and sun hugging each other and yet each struggling to have the day—this was the situation. Our coffee came. What a vile liquid to drink—but peering into it seems to relieve the mind, or rather the eyes, from facing the facts. The music that came over the speaker singed our hearts as the words pierced our brains—how true and effective were those little three- and four-letter words in stirring our emotions.

The song ended and there was laughter, shuffling, and horseplay within the confines of the other booths. It annoyed both of us, and quickly out of the corner of my eye I caught a glancing, floating spark which she hurriedly hid by lifting her cup. Having been, myself, fidgeting and fingering the handle of my cup, I ashamedly, sub-consciously, repeated her act. The coffee cooled so fast as it passed by my internal twisted organs that I could not collect my thoughts—the warm liquid was only a seemingly momentary release.

There we were, each knowing how bottomless the infinite number of days ahead would be. Why can't we?—we love each other! But only God knew the answer. We were crippled with the situation, not knowing what to do with expansive yet compressive seconds. The church clock on the other corner then chimed once; it was time for me to leave for the train station. Our eyes met like the golden sun's rays peeking on an overcast day, and we knew—we understood—that this had to be. We searched each other's lips

with our eyes for the fated farewells, and realized each again that we understood. I, rising awkwardly, turned from the sunset and gazed at a hue that to me was a conglomeration. I walked away slowly, hesitantly, hoping that some day—praying that some day soon—I would see the lovely sun rise again.

“Ten cents,” the cashier said. “Ten cents!” Already one particle of my dusty sleep was gone and here I was—amidst life again.

EFFECTS OF SPRING

MARY MCCALL

It's like spring today.
The sun is shining
With that glare of brightness;
The atmosphere is fragrant
With freshness.
There is a mystical, inexplicable something
That disarms,
Takes my ambition,
And leaves me dreaming.

I become arrogant,
And I defy God.
“I will not work!”
I say.
“I know that I have set my goals
And that I have prayed for help,
But I cannot do it;
I am human.”

Man—how vain he is!
He aims;
He strives;
He prays;
He starts his task.
But that is not all.

Then spring—
That frivolous, important thing—
Comes, disarms, and leaves him
Engrossed in dreams,
Not ambitions.
He stops.
O frail man,
O frail man—
Yes, he knows
That he is frail!

INTERLUDE

WANDA SMYTH

“What am I doing here? I had to come—just for a moment. Please, please. Don't let me disturb your meditation. Don't let me intrude.”

“You are not intruding, my dear. Sit here beside me on the stone bench. Here—”

“No. No, don't. Don't touch me. I don't want to sit down!”

“Then, would you like to walk around the garden. The flowers are blooming and—”

“No. No. I don't want anything—really. I just came to—to look—to

Nine

look at the garden, at the church. Oh, I can't explain why I came. I just had to—"

"Would you like to go inside the church? It will soon be time for evening prayer."

"No!"

"Is there something wrong? You never come here anymore, but you said that you had to come today. You seem disturbed."

"No, Father. —It seems odd calling *you* that, but it is appropriate now, I guess. Don't be patient with me. Don't keep trying to console me. Don't talk even. I had to come, but I don't want to pray."

"There is something wrong. Can't I help you? Tell me, please."

"No. Please go on with your meditation. I don't want to intrude. I always have."

"How silly. You belong here. How could you intrude? Your problems are mine, my dear."

"How could I intrude!—No, no. I guess I couldn't—really. Don't let my problems be your, not any more. Oh, it isn't important. Let us just be silent for a moment and watch the swallows make shadows against the brown of the stone church. See the black and white cattle grazing over there in the distance near the horizon. We can fill our souls with the eternal beauty of the flowers the good ladies of the church planted in the garden. Must we talk? I had rather just watch the sun set and feel the chill of evening move across the garden. Can't we find beauty and peace in the fading light as it slips away and darkness moves in to become king? Let's just be silent—and remember—just for a moment—"

"I must go now. Thank you, Bill—Father."

"Go! Aren't you going to stay for evening prayer? You have not been for so long—"

"I must go!"

"What is wrong? You are trembling. Why, Luana, you are crying!"

"Am I? Don't bother about it. I am sorry I intruded for a moment. Please don't be concerned. Just try to understand as I have been trying to understand for the past months. Don't frown so. I had much rather you would smile as I leave."

"You are going, then? Luana, look at me. It has to be this way. We have been through this all many times before. Please, you do understand now, don't you?"

"I understand, Father. It is all right—now."

"Luana, may I pray for you?"

"No!—Yes, pray for me."

"And you will come back into the communion, and for confession soon. May I expect you for morning prayer on Sunday, perhaps?"

"Perhaps. Goodnight, Father Goodbye."

SPRING MEMORY

DONNA MINCEY

Like a fleeting sigh
You passed by me one day,
Just a scented touch
Of warm and flowery May.
You were a little breeze
Who fluttered down my street,
And dropped a purple bunch
Of violets at my feet.
I stooped to lift them up
From my freshening lawn,
But then, like a lovely dream,
They—and you—were gone.

WHY

MITZI MUELLER

He led them over ground where blood's dark stain
Spoke mutely of the wounded and the slain.
He led them through the weary days, the nights
More terrible because they had no lights.
A soldier just as they were, at his task.
Their leader. Why? Nobody stopped to ask.
Philosopher? No more than you or I—
An average man, and as such, had to die.
But there were many like him; they remain
And lie there, too, beneath the sun and rain.

His eyes, grown weary with the stress and strain,
With seeing men in peril and in pain,
Accustomed to the dirt and smears of war,
Looked homeward often, thought of friends afar.
His dreams, like theirs, of sleepy summer time
When all the world had reason, Life had rhyme.
Of winter walks, and fireside's cheery blaze.
Of springtime, and its laughter-laden days.
He sees them, but he sees them yet in vain,
For battles must be won—lost—won again.

He wonders, though, as thoughts course through his brain,
What Evil made him brother unto Cain.
He ponders what the enemy must feel,
And wonders at the hardness of his heel.
How strange that man's great efforts go for war
With peace in second place. What fools we are!
Too late, too late. The time, the place is here.
So on with chaos, death, confusion, fear.
No time to think, hysterical, we cry,
And only stop to gasp and fall and die
With this, our final breath, our last refrain—
"Oh, God, don't let it all have been in vain!"

We see, we hear, we do not understand;
Are born of Man, and meet death by his hand.
We pray, in accents harsh with blame and doubt.
Please, God, oh, give us minds to think this out!

LOOKING BACKWARD

LOUISE GULLADY

It is amazing how, as we grow older, our memories of childhood come to us. Even the little things stand out in our minds, things which at the time were of little consequence. Often a person who has been asked to describe an incident out of his past, replies that he can't remember that far back but then a small spark of recollection will bring on more and more until the whole occurrence seems to have happened the day before.

That is how it was with me. I tried to think of something pleasant that happened to me in my childhood. To my surprise, the thoughts which came to me were not of unusual experiences but of every-day occurrences, hum-drum then but cherished now.

My childhood was spent on a farm. It isn't an unusually large farm but it is productively adequate. In my mental roavings I thought back to those hot, sunny days when after some pleading my father would allow me to accompany him to the tobacco field for the afternoon.

Of all the processes involved in raising Kentucky tobacco, I liked best to go to the field when the golden stalks were being cut to be hung in the barns to cure. I would stand, often barefooted, and watch as the sharp tomahawk-like knives of steel were used to hack through the green, tough stalks. The warm earth together with the sound of leaves fanning the air before being speared onto a wooden stick created a sleepy atmosphere. Then I would sit in the shade of a big tree and watch the activity from a distance. The air was filled with many scents: rank tobacco; sweet blossoms of morning glory vines which were not completely conquered by the cultivator; fresh, clean alfalfa hay flourishing over the fence; sweat-filled shirts; rich, productive earth—clean, wholesome smells when taken all together.

This was before the tractor and truck took over the heavy farm work. The mule, stubborn but far from dumb, was used for the heavy wagons loaded with sap-filled burley. Often I would be allowed to “drive” the team between the rows of waiting tobacco as the hired men loaded it from both sides. Of course, the mules could have done what I asked of them without my guidance, and they often did. But weren’t they much older and more experienced than I? Nevertheless, I would sit on the rough wagon and swing my feet off the front of it, all the while proudly holding the reins. It was a pleasant feeling to sit there, slowly rolling over the plowed ground which had long ago become hard from the heat of the sun. The iron-rimmed wooden wheels left ruts in the ground which deepened as the load increased. The men, when they wanted the wagon to stop or move on, would say, “O.K., little boss, we’re ready.” It was wonderful, that feeling of responsibility that the child psychologist speaks of.

I was a very tired, very dirty little girl when I dragged one heavy foot after the other into the house after a long hot afternoon in the sun. The cooling breeze of descending night was a welcome relief, pleasantly relaxing to the tired muscles. It had been a strenuous day but a happy one.

Yes, the mind is an amazing thing, tucking away the little incidents with the big, the happy ones among the sad—to be recalled and enjoyed many times.

JET PLANES

MARJORIE JORDAN

Four gleaming specks form a silver diamond against the clear, unending blue of the sky. Higher and higher they go, climbing an invisible pillar holding up the sky. The spectator holds his breath and raises his head, higher and higher, until all he sees is the immensity of the sky and those impertinent silver specks brashly penetrating its long unviolated realm.

Suddenly the spectator swallows a deep gulp of air; the specks have separated. Slowly, so slowly, they break away from one another, and like slowly opening petals of a flower, separate and fall slowly to opposite directions.

Downward they glide, sliding down the curved sky as gracefully as skiers down a smooth slope. Faster and faster they drop, gaining speed; down, down, down, they come, as if they were but dull pieces of earth, scorned by the fastidious sky and hurled away in anger.

Suddenly the spectator jumps, startled. A whooshing roar engulfs him, and then, far in the distance, the silver plane streaks skyward again. Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, from all angles the planes swoop down on the gaping crowds. They’re coming—they’re gone. There is a flash of silver, a momentary glimpse of a slender body and tapering wings, a roaring whine, and then the planes rush on, banking, soaring, climbing high back to their homeland.

They were only fooling, coming down to earth. They meant only to tease us, to laugh at the dull rustics bound to the dusty earth and gaping with wonder at the wild freedom of these new gods. Summoned home, the planes frolic together like children, happy and joyous in their home, the sky.

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FOREWORD

This 1955 volume of BELLES LETTRES has been prepared with three aims in mind: to include as many different kinds of writings as possible, to include the writings of as many students as possible, and at the same time to maintain as high a literary standard as possible.

The editor and the staff of BELLES LETTRES wish to present this twenty-first volume with an expression of gratitude to its readers and to its contributors, who make this publication possible, and with a hope that it has achieved its aims and that it merits the continued interest of the public.

A MEDITATION ON THE RAIN

DIANA MILLER

Rain is one of the most beautiful phenomena of nature. It can be like a cool sheet of metal that makes you want to lean your forehead against it to draw strength from its restive powers. At times, it is like a soft, wispy veil with which the entire universe has robbed itself. Then you want to push it aside to peer at half-hidden wonders. Sometimes the rain is angry and looks like slender, slivery-gray eels twisting and turning in the space between heaven and earth. Perhaps rain is most beautiful when it is no longer silver and gray, but when the sun is directly behind it, radiating aureolas of red, gold, and sapphire.

Yet, in spite of all of its beauty and splendor, I hate the rain. It keeps me cooped up in the house for days when I yearn to run through a green field letting the wind caress my hair and wish to play, sing, dance, and laugh. I, who love the sun on my back and the cloudless blue sky, must sit inside playing checkers, watching the water stream down the window-panes, and listening to the monotonous clamor of the raindrops pattering on the roof and spattering on the streets outside.

Rain is an inconvenience in other ways. The ground becomes muddy and wet and I ruin a good pair of shoes. I have to carry a portable roof, and I always leave it some place and then have to search for it. If I decide to wear galoshes, I have to rise ten minutes earlier in the mornings to get them to fit over my shoes. I have to wear a raincoat even in the summertime. The water drips off the bottom of it into my shoes. My hair becomes limp and damp and droops into my eyes. I look and feel bedraggled.

I dislike rain because of what it does to people. They become impatient and restless. They are irritable and peevish. Their viewpoint on life becomes shadowed by pessimism. People don't laugh and smile very much when it rains. They lose their gaiety and joyousness and become morose and downcast. The clouds that come with the rain put clouds on the spirit.

All bad things seem to happen when it rains. Cars collide on slick roads and people die. Persons tumble down wet steps and break their legs. Rain is for funerals and murder. More people commit suicide when it rains.

Although I despise rain and its immediate effects, I realize that when it is viewed from its every angle, it is really a blessing in disguise. Because of rain, I am able to run through the green meadow and enjoy the beauties of the sunny, spring day. The rain is converted into gurgling brooks which sing gaily as they dance down the hillside. It enables the flowers to display themselves proudly in all their glory. It makes the corn grow tall and straight in the field. It puts the freshness in the breeze and even provides the way by which I quench my thirst. Rain disciplines me so that I may endure the sad and, through that discipline, makes me more appreciative of the happy.

DAY

RUTHIE PATTERSON

As the purple curtains of morning
Push the shade out and away,
I look out of my window
And call to the infant day.
Because there's so much to be done
I wish to do all if I may,
But if I can't, I'll not worry,
God will send another day.

THE TRIUMPH

MARY MCCALL

A train thunders past.
Its sound becomes so vociferous that
I feel it is rushing straight at me—
That it will crumple my body.
Listen! The sound fades;
It is almost gone.
Slowly, surely the train goes its way.
It picks up speed and rushes on—away from me.

But I hear it still.
Will it ever leave?
Listen; it is hardly audible.
Ah, now some other noise drowns out that of the blatant train.

For a moment I am distracted.
When I turn my attention again to the train,
Its sound is very faint.
I hear it no more.
Is it gone?
Yes, yes, oh, yes!
It is gone.

The other noise attracted my attention.
So intently did my mind fix on it
That the spell was broken.
My trepidation is no more.

As Satan's turbulent thunder roars about me,
I feel that he is coming straight to me—
That he will crush me.
He creeps back into the shadows—
Fading, but not completely from sight.
He picks up momentum and turns, supposedly, from me.

Still he lingers—will he ever leave?
Look! He is hardly noticeable.
Another—God—draws my attention.
For a moment I am overwhelmed by His presence.
He reassures me and I know I am safe when He is near.

Satan rushes away.
I see him no more.
Is he—is he gone?
Yes, oh, yes! He is gone.
God is here

BEFORE THE END

RUTHIE PATTERSON

Many friends and much delight,
Bright clear days and starry nights;
Love and health and joy and cheer,
Faith to last me all the years;
Prayer and life all in one,
Desire and seeking to be won;
I ask the Maker these things to send
Before He says, "Come, 'tis the end."

AFTER RAIN

ANN HELMAN

I think that after it has rained,
And all the world is pure again,
And all the birds so gladly sing,
And calls of frogs around you ring;
I think if I were not aware,
If these grand things I could not share
With other ones who have their sight,
And ones to whom it's not always night;
To those who hear these little calls,
To whom life's not a vacuumed hall;
I think that I would be missing life,
Although mine's one that's filled with strife;
And though I neither hear nor see,
These little things are clear to me.

THORNS HAVE ROSES

BARBARA E. WHITE

It isn't so much the way things are
As the way we look at a thing.
There's always the note of a merry song
For the voice that is ready to sing.
And "roses have thorns" is a stupid cry,
For, while it may all be so,
I think we'd better be telling the world
That "thorns have roses," you know.

We cannot expect to live our lives
From all that is bitter apart,
And each one knows when he's felt a thorn,
By the pain it has left in his heart.
He doesn't need us to tell him it's there
Or murmur a maxim of woe.
I think we'd better be telling the world
That "thorns have roses," you know.

LIFE

BARBARA SCOVILLE

Life is what you make it,
However, good or bad.
But this depends on how
You take the good and the bad.

Your life may be all gladness,
And I do pray this so,
However, if in sadness,
Let me say it isn't so.

For in your walk throughout the world,
God's treasures you're bound to behold,
And this suffices for all the sadness,
And frees your life from woe.

THE GROVE

GEORGE WOLFFORD

There is a place in every heart that brings back visions of yesterday, a place that one longs to revisit. The particular spot that I like is an oak grove that overlooks the Sandy Valley in Parker County. It is about half a mile from the main road and is reached over a rugged, log trail. Much of the beauty of the land there comes from its unspoiled natural view. I like to come to my favorite seat under the oaks just to the right of the grove. These trees are alone on a cleared hillside and stand strong and tall as though they were overlords of the pines just beneath the cliff. Seated in this little haven of scenery I have memories of what used to be, and such memories may drift through even the younger minds.

I remember the first time that I ever saw the grove. Ramsey took Marcus and me up there and told us a few tall tales about the former visitors and residents of the area. He told us of the early settlers of the region, and of the battles between the pioneers and the Indians. From that time on, whenever Marcus and I worked in Ramsey's tobacco, we would rest there in the shade and drink from the cool spring that trickles out of the hillside. The water is running there yet, but old Ramsey's tobacco patch is now just a field of stubble.

From a vantage point there in the oaks the whole country shows a desolate beauty. As far to the left as the log road, the pines are peeping up over the edge of the cliff. The cliff itself is barren and alone among the greenery of the trees and the grass. The limestone glistens white in the late afternoon sun. On over from the cliff is Ramsey's old tobacco patch. Ramsey hasn't grown any tobacco there for two or three years. He says that he's too old to do the work himself, and since I've gone away and Marcus is dead, there is no one to help him. Marcus was killed in a wreck down at the "Y" winter before last. He was the kind of a fellow that everyone liked. I think about Marcus often, and in my memories he belongs here in the grove.

On up the hill from the stubbled field is the barn and the fence. Since he retired from the tobacco business, Ramsey has been keeping cattle in the barn. He had to put the fence up to keep the cattle from falling over the cliff. It is surprising how many people around here lose cattle that way. There to the right of the barn is the patch that leads up to the old Baker House. Ramsey said that sixty years ago this was the most beautiful home in the valley. The only thing that stands straight now is the sandstone block chimney. Some of those blocks on the bottom of that chimney are three feet cubes. I've often wondered how people built structures like that one without modern tools. Ramsey says that Old Baker had over a hundred slaves, but you can't believe half of what Ramsey says. He's been around this old world too long. He tells sometimes of parties and dances that the Bakers had.

Now, look how the cattle stroll in and out of the back door just as if they had helped design the building. The house has been deserted since the killing around the turn of the century. Another one of Ramsey's tales is that the house has been haunted since one of the Henrys hit Old Baker's son in the head with a poker in a fight over Baker's wife. There is still a big brown bloodstain on the sandstone fireplace inside. No one believes that the place is haunted, but most of the Henrys stay away from here. I saw Marilyn Henry here once when Oakwood church had a picnic. She cried when some of the boys went over to the house to look at the bloodstain. That was the only time I ever saw any of the Henrys at the church picnic.

A well-worn cow path runs from the old house there up to the final point of interest in this end of the valley—the little oak grove itself. There are only seven of the oaks, but they must give off half an acre of shade. The trunks make good chairbacks and places to carve hearts and initials during a church picnic. To make nature's hospitality complete, the water that comes out of the sandstones is the sweetest I've ever tasted. This is undoubtedly a misplaced corner of the Garden of Eden.

Every time I come here I get a dreamy feeling and a sort of longing for the past. Late in the evenings when I am here alone, I see ghosts and shadows, not of Indians or pioneers or of young Baker, but I see tobacco sprouting in the open field. I see the friends of my youth, who will never congregate again. I see Marcus and Old Ramsey coming up the path. No matter how depressing and blue I feel, I'll always like to come here alone and dream.

As Shelley said, "Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thoughts."

DEATH

SHARON BROWN

Death could be good now.
The soft, cold rest
After days of ceaseless living,
Days of happiness and sorrow,
Days of love;
Death could be welcomed now.
Life would be over
With no more tiresome pacing,
No more endless living,
No more competition.
The dead rest.
But death will not come;
Life lingers.
Come, Weary Soul, come back to me;
Death rejects me—
He will not have me now.

THE FAMILY CHORUS

MAVIS CURRY

Along about ten, I jumped with a start,
Goodness! What was that?—
Well, maybe the cat in the cellar just caught a rat.
I listened at the cellar door.
But it was only Aunt Tilda beginning to snore.

Ten-fifteen brought another chord.
Something was walking on loose boards.
No, that wasn't Aunt Tilda's chord.
It was Uncle Henry sawing gourds.

Cousin Suse joined in with a snort and a puff;
Then came Dad with a puff and a ruff.
I heard the hired man give a weeze—;
But what in the world was that?—
Mom added drama wanting a new red hat.

How can I sleep or rest
With the family chorus at its best?
Wake them up in fright?—
No, nothing so unmannered as that—
I'll just join in of course!

SPRING DAWN

JERRY TAYLOR

It's early.
The sun has raised one bright eye above the
Horizon. Wafting gently in the air is the
Scent of dew-drenched violets.
A robin chirps lazily as he awakens.
The sky turns from soft amber to violent
Tangerine, then fades into mauve.
The robin flies into the soft, lavender wind.
Crisp daffodils turn their yellow heads upward.
The sky blazes a golden, rusty-orange
And warms the quiet emerald grass.
The earth awakens.

WHO IS WISE?

RUTHIE PATTERSON

Children playing by the stream
Of babbling rocks and rushing dreams,
Pause and look up as I come by
To ask me why it is I cry.

Mother, running to my side
With words to give my heart a ride,
Stands aghast with a trembling sigh
Reasoning hopelessly why I cry.

Tulips budding in the sun
Untie their formal dress of fun,
Nod silently as I walk by
Without asking why I cry.

TO PART

ANN HELMAN

"Parting such sweet sorrow is."
Sweet to those who've known it not,
For those who have known this so well
Will say that sweet it's not; for those
Who part will know but this until
The loved returns, and then when
Fleeting goes again, will sorrow see.
Here hearts that changed and hardened are.
For parting is a trial that proves
All God's emotions and children,
And those are stronger who have parted then.
Parting sweet? It cannot be,
When parted we must be again,
'Till time when we must live again
In present and not future, when
Sad parting once does come again.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

RUDENE RUSSELL

It was five o'clock in the morning when the alarm woke Johnnie. Why did he have to rise so early on a Saturday morning when all college students feel they should sleep late?

From Johnnie's bedroom he could hear his mother rattling pots and pans as she was getting breakfast. He could smell the odor of coffee which made him very hungry.

He dragged himself over to the window and raised the shade. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was rising with all its colors, and the birds had already begun to sing. The green grass across the pasture was wet with dew. Johnnie thought of the times he had run the cows up at night to be milked, the times he had watched his father do the same thing. How he wished his father were alive, and why did the accident have to happen?

As he turned to get dressed, his mother called him for breakfast. He didn't realize he had been standing there so long. He replied, "I'm getting dressed. I'll be right down."

When he was leaving the room, he picked up his shotgun. "It might be a nice day for huntin'," he thought. When he was going down the stairs, his mother stopped in the hall with amazement and just looked. After a few seconds Johnnie said, "Good morning, Mom, isn't this a pretty day?"

"Good morning, John, but whatever are you doing with that gun?"

"Oh, I thought I might go bird hunting today."

"You hurry and get washed for breakfast; I want to talk with you."

As he set his gun in the corner and headed for the bathroom he said,

"Mom, what do you want to talk to me about?"

"You hurry and come on in here."

Something must really be going to take place. Never before had his mother acted like that.

He washed within a few minutes and hurried to the dining room.

"Nothing serious has happened, John. I just wanted you to eat breakfast with me. You look so much like your father. You'll never know how lonesome it is here by myself. It seems sometimes as if the day will never pass."

"You aren't by yourself. May I have another cup of coffee?"

"Surely."

"Mom, I would like to go huntin' today." He was trying to change the subject.

"Well, Johnnie, I guess you are old enough to know what you want. I'll help you get dressed."

As his mother got up from the table, Johnnie looked at her with sorrow. He could see the wrinkles under her eyes.

He finished his coffee and a cigarette and got up. His mother helped him with his jacket and kissed him on the cheek.

He picked up the gun and was walking toward the door when his mother said, "Be careful."

"Okay, Mom, I won't be gone long."

As he was leaving, she stood in the doorway with her eyes misty watching him go down the lane. His father had gone down that lane also, but he never came back.

STRENGTH FOR TOMORROW

BETTY MITCHELL

The day was bright and prophetic
of things coming.
The sun with its stolid promise and
the gentle breezes humming,
Rolling soft hills with their thoughts
and emotions unseen,
All folded into one magnificent and
glorious scene.
But through it all, I somehow was
lonely and sighing
For the love, ambition, and youth
soon to be dying.
For all is slowly fading away
into the past
As each unfulfilled day steals into
yesterday, ever so fast.
I stand, a symbol of man and the
world it seems,
Which fails to reach the peace and
happiness of its dreams.
Dead is yesterday, but I am the
present and forebearer of tomorrow.
Hurry! Hurry! Wake me with work and hope
to shatter the shadows of future sorrow.

SPRING

GENE GOSS

Spring, that Queen of all seasons,
Gives birth to flowers again—
And trees, and birds, and laughter,
And songs of loves of men.

The fragrance of the rose
Takes flight in the vernal breeze;
And the rose gives life to its Maker,
The blood of sweet Adonis.

The smell of fruiting blossom,
The dew upon the field,
The seed of last year's sowing,
Takes life and starts to yield.

The breath of last year's kiss
Still brings a sweet omen
That love will go on living,
That spring will live again,

When life, that fleeting substance,
Falls heavy on my brow,
And love, the life of living,
Shall cease to death to bow.

WATER SNAKES

JERRY TAYLOR

The rivulets of water slither down the window pane
Like crystal snakes.

The drops splash against the glass and flatten out.
Then they swell,

And run together into miniature brooks of clear, cool moisture.
They slide, breakneck, down the pane.

I sit and watch these glassy snakes writhe in death agonies.
Soon, they are gone.

I wonder what becomes of them.

GEMS

ANN HELMAN

For these few moments slipping fast away
Are now as gems, and gems will ever be.
For gems don't die; they're here forever more
As just to us our love will always be.

Gems of happy ruby-red,
The sadness of the blue,
The solitude so loved, as pearls;
The bright, white light that say's we're true.

A gem for every mood and thought
To sparkle in our soul as real,
As though they really here do dwell.
Dream gems are these, not real.

ACTION

ROGER STEPHENS

The whining wind shocked the trees with sudden bursts,
The whole earth seemed haunted with green shadows.
Cows bawled with low stricken moans, and
Chickens let out occasional, nervous laughter.
Birds huddled around their sacred nests,
While shiftless snails feared to crawl.
Even crickets were silent and whippoorwills feared to trill.

Adam walked across the earth without thinking
And Eve brushed her hair needlessly.
Only the dogs howled with any sincerity,
Because of the absence of felines and rats.
The buzzards waited in swirling expectation
While their young rattled hungrily on.
Mickey Mouse pranced in the local theatre opposite Minnie.

All for what?

AD ASTRA

MARY MCCALL

I long to indite. So ardently do I wish and hope that tears appear in my eyes at the very thought of it.

I do not have the time to pursue my wish. Each day is already so filled that it is difficult to accomplish the necessities. I can foresee no relief; my schedule becomes more crowded. I plod on miserably, wishes unfulfilled.

I am exuberant with inspirations; they spring forth daily. They are sundry: topics such as ethics, morals, religion, friendship, people, and college life all course through this brain of mine.

Yet I remain sitting with some textbook in my hand and preparing the next day's assignment, while all the time I am longing to take up my pen and write. Thoughts flash through my mind and are gone; I sit thinking on issues and characters. My textbook lies neglected, but I do not write.

I dream of vivifying some actual character; I look forward to the day when I shall tell my story, the day when I shall be understood through my own words.

I face a decision: which is more important, studious absorption of knowledge or a newly written poem or essay? Each day I battle with myself. I say, "You cannot write well without experience." My conscience echoes back, "Neither can you be a good student without thorough study." Yes, we—my conscience and I—are both right, but the perpetual dilemma continues.

Yet by writing this I have reached a decision: I do not really accomplish anything by merely thinking on some inspiration. Before me lies a neglected textbook; next to my pen is a blank sheet of paper glaring at me, daring me to write. While I am trying to convince myself that I should be studying, my inspiration fades away. I am remorseful because I did not write. I have gained nothing and have wasted my time.

There is no reason why I should not write when I feel the urge to do so. Inspirations are valuable but short lived; they do not perpetuate themselves. Books are always available; I can study them whenever I please, but inspirations become stale and lose their vividness.

Writing is no easy task. I must have an ideal to present or something to say. Even then it is not so easy as it seems. There is that time of feverish anxiety when getting my thought down on paper is the important thing. Then follows reflection and revision. "Did I really mean this?" "Is that what I intended to say?" "Can it be more aptly and logically constructed?" I read somewhere that it is good to lay one's writing aside for a period of time and come back to it later when one is better able to be more self-critical and analytical. It is good to revise until what has been written is so compact that to change one word would change the whole thought. It is finished then, and only then.

The feeling of knowing that I have created something new and worthwhile is a pleasant reward. I gain a certain passive satisfaction from writing. The time and effort are well spent.

I will continue to write when I have an inspiration or when I have something I want to say. My textbook may lie neglected but only for an hour or two. Studious absorption of knowledge is only a means of education; writing is an education!

LEST I SHALL FORGET

CHARLES GRIGSBY

The memories of those nights,
Beautiful nights,
Nights we were together,
Are in my heart on Towering Heights,
A love lives there forever.

How I remember the touch of your lips,
Your caresses so tenderly,
For your love my soul sadly sips
From this radiant Memory.

Why did you leave me,
Leave me standing there?
Your exit came with a cool breeze,
Dancing softly through your golden hair.

Your eyes were in resemblance
With stars high in the skies,
There in the dark of nothing,
My soul surely lies.

As I sit here with slumped shoulders,
Head bending—bowing low,
Not knowing where to turn . . .
Not knowing where to go,
I tell you of this love,
'Twas mine—surely I shall admit,
So I'll cherish these words forever,
—Lest I shall forget.

MINE

RAY E. WILLIAMS

Oh, the morning comes so early,
Drawing me from fitful dreaming
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all my own.

The fragrance of air enfolds me,
From the gaiety of one evening
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all my own.

Awaking, find your heart is broken
Shattered and torn and sorely bleeding
From a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

Death is but an instant,
A broken heart is ever beating
For a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

It would be a wise decision
To destroy your heart's own feeling
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

But to destroy is a sin;
Go on, remember every feeling
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

AUTUMN

MARY MCCALL

Autumn is coming.
The mornings are cold.
Here and there sunlight flickers
Through to the leaves on the trees.
A hardy gust of wind blows;
Leaves come floating down, down to the ground.
They rustle under my feet.
I stoop to pick one up and examine it.
Its veins form a beautiful, graceful pattern.
I crease it down the middle;
Its sides touch in symmetry.
A swift breeze carries it from my hand.
It glides down to the ground,
And becomes one of the many leaves absorbing the sunlight there.

As I begin to walk, I notice that the sun is brighter now.
For the first time I realize that the rays of the sun are warm on my back.
Turning, I shade my eyes from the sun with my hand
And peer at it a few minutes.
I wonder and marvel at its beauty
And try to imagine the extent of its power.
I can hardly fancy that
An object so remote can so profoundly influence my life.

Yet a month from now this sun will not shine brightly.
I shall not feel its warm rays on my back.
Harsh winds will tug at me,
And I shall gaze longingly for the sun,
Eager for its warmth and friendliness.
For a moment I imagine the sun sinks from sight.
I feel myself driven by the cold, piercing winter winds.
But it is Autumn;
I will not think of Winter.
The sun emerges, flickering again through the leaves.

In a distant field I espy shocked corn stalks,
Their dull, drab hue pervades my soul.
I avert my eyes, seeking a gay, colorful scene.

Now I discern a garden; the vegetables have been gathered,
And weeds have taken their places.
But the pumpkins still remain on the vines.
Never was their golden, orange color more beautiful.

Now the sun is sinking in the west;
The leaves on the trees blow gently and slowly in autumn's breeze,
As peaceful and graceful as the soft waves of the sea.
Deep, dark shadows begin to loom everywhere.
Twilight broadcasts that day is drawing to an end and night is coming.
A long amorphous ribbon of intermingled yellow
Fills the sky until it becomes alive with color.

Back of it all the sun, fiery orange, magnified,
Descends lower and lower from sight.
Everything seems gone.
A chilling night breeze sweeps over the land.

RUNNERUP

BETTY GIBSON

Somehow it had happened again. Lucy had seen Dave with another girl. Flopping into a chair and flinging her books on the bed, Lucy stared out of the window with unseeing eyes. Still, if one had examined those eyes closely, one would have detected an expression of hurt bewilderment rising to the surface, like a pin which had pricked a tiny hole in a balloon, thereby letting the air escape slowly. It wasn't just Dave alone; it was a life-long pattern, that of being second best, or just never quite good enough. Like an ocean wave unexpectedly smacking her in the face, remembrances of former years engulfed her with their relentless pattern.

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A little seven-year-old, nervous, big-eyed second-grader, Lucy, dotted an "i" and stood up.

"A perfect lesson," she remarked smugly to herself. "I'll beat Sue Moore today and have a reading lesson back without a mark on it. I'll show her."

The other children in line glanced at Lucy curiously. Her thin knees wobbled, she gulped nervously several times, and little rivulets of sweat ran off her clutched hands onto the neat paper.

"Next," called the teacher.

Lucy handed the paper to Miss Hansen wordlessly, with sanguine hope and apprehension flickering across her small face. Sue had been in front of Lucy, and Lucy had strained her neck to see that big "100" at the top of Sue's paper.

"Write in more complete sentences, however," the teacher had said, smiling at Sue.

"I'm sorry, Lucy, but wheel is spelled w-h-e-e-l, not w-e-e-l. You'll have a perfect reading lesson next time, I know."

Catching Sue's impudent, triumphant, and smug glance, Lucy wanted to cry, scream, and kick. But with perfect composure she went to her seat, proudly quelling the babyish impulses.

Next year, the third grade was divided: the fast ones to one group, the slow ones to another. Lucy was left behind in the slow group, and tears welled up in her big, appealing, chocolate-ball eyes as she watched the fast group march out, Sue among them, grinning back at Lucy maliciously. Why? Why? Why?

"I'm not dumb. I know I'm not," she thought tremulously. In fact, she had once walked by the principal's office and had seen her mother talking to the principal. Apparently, they were in the midst of a deeply engrossing conversation because the small eavesdropped just outside the door frame went unnoticed.

"Your Lucy is mentally able to make the best grades in school; in fact, she possesses a brilliant mind. But I just can't understand it, an inhibition, perhaps"

Lucy fled quickly like a dog with its tail tucked between its legs.

Valentine's Day in the fifth grade was still a big day, though the children were ten or eleven years old. A tacit understanding permeated the fiercely competitive classroom that the child who received the greatest number of valentines would be selected as the most popular person of the room. Sue Moore's desk was heaped with thirty-seven valentines, one from every child in the room. Lucy didn't fail to notice this because, though she had received many, they were not enough to separate her from the pack. "Second best again," she thought.

That summer Lucy was sent to a day camp. Sports had never interested her much, but at least she learned to play golf—a form of it, that is. In the playoff tournament she was runner-up. The tennis tournament found her second also; the swimming race was a tie with another girl. The following year, as runner-up in the archery match, she stolidly lugged home another second-place medal.

"You seem to be the runner-up-kid," her brother laughingly but innocently remarked.

"The pattern was set then," she thought, as she curled one foot under herself in the chair.

Then there was that time in the ninth grade when she had wanted so desperately to be in the last play of the year. Her home-room teacher read off the cast. As each name was called her eyes got bigger, her knees turned to water, and her breath came in spasmodic gasps, as she leaned forward infinitesimally. Finally as the list was completed and Lucy with a trembling sigh slumped back into her seat, she caught Sue's narrowed eyes upon her in a half-pitying, half-derisive stare. Sue, of course, had received the favored part.

Report card day came. Lucy sat unconcernedly with both hands propped under her chin.

"Here, Lucy . . ."

As she noted the marks on that all-important piece of blue paper, her eyes rattled around their sockets like two peas in a foot-long pod. All A's! An electric shock of pride and elation stiffened her spine, causing her to turn slowly around with a self-satisfied smile and let the other classmates know of her good fortune.

But from the excited, shrill treble and the hoarse bass of triumphant voices Lucy knew that she was *not alone* in her wonderful feeling; she was part of a *crowd*. She turned away, wordlessly . . .

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College had not helped. In fact, it had accentuated the problem. She was still never first, only second; and sometimes not even that.

Then Dave had appeared, as if from nowhere, blasting his way into Lucy's misty, shadowy world of nothingness.

"How about a coke?"

"Love to."

So, for a while, she had floated along on the pink cloud of "Most desired one"—until today, that is . . .

When the buzzer sounded, slicing through her reverie like a hot knife through butter, Lucy was wafted on wings of expectation to the telephone . . .

Dressing for her date with Dave that night she paused, comb in midair.

"Hmm . . . I wonder if I was the first girl he called or only the second?"

LONELINESS

BARBARA SCOVILLE

You've robbed me of the lust in me.
You've taken my only smile.
You've left me here alone to wait for you all the while.

It's not so strange I miss you,
And it's not because I'm all alone;
It's just because you've taken with you
The lust of which I own.

You can keep my heart,
You can have my soul,
But they must be united.
As you have the one, I cannot live without you, divided.

Come back, my love,
Come back, come back.
Before my life has subsided,
And we will be together dear, forever united.

A YELLOW ROSE

CHARLES GRIGSBY

A yellow rose with seeds all flung
Across a barren plain,
Each seed a symbol of tears I've shed,
Each tear I've shed in vain.

Oh! But to see the yellow rose,
A sight beyond compare,
To whiff its pleasant fragrance,
And smell the sweetened air.

To kiss its petals gently,
And hold with ultimate pride,
And watch when the day is darkened,
Where the pollens safely hide.

Too good to be true this happiness,
As my joy had come to a close.
Oh! wishful was I that together we'd be.
Just me and my yellow rose.

The spring changed to summer,
And the summer oozed slowly to fall,
And from out of fall came the winter,
A plant's life merciless stall.

A yellow rose trying to touch the sky,
Gasping for one warm ray of light,
Struggled with an optimistic urge,
And reached with all its might.
And with a shudder of defeat,
The rose wilted on the birth of night,
And the petals loosened from the bud
And drifted slowly out of sight.

And the seeds that were left behind
Were thrown by the mighty winds
To a plain deserted, as a winter tree,
To the edge where the world begins.

And the seeds thereof were scattered far;
Some north, some east, some west,
And even some were scattered,
Beside the grave in which I rest.

And on my grave there grows,
Why? (Only the Almighty knows),
The roots there grow into my heart,
My heart's desire, my yellow rose.

A yellow rose with seeds all flung
Across a barren plain,
Each seed a symbol of tears I've shed,
Each tear was not in vain.

VICTIM OF THE POWERFUL

LOUISE GULLADY

The street was quiet just before the dawn; nothing was stirring but the bright, golden brown leaves which had not yet drifted to the ground. Flitting from tree to tree was a pair of industrious, vigorous starlings that had not joined the southward moving throng of blackness which had been gliding along overhead for many days.

Steve Paine stepped out into the damp, sweet, penetrating air of the late October morning with little thought of anything but the splendor of the day as the sun began to brighten above the trees and rooftops.

As he walked the shower-moistened grass to the sidewalk, he stopped to gaze at the squirrels frisking on the piles of leaves he had raked into mounds the previous day. He chuckled at the havoc they were creating of the once neat, unstrewn lawn; then strode on to the sidewalk that led up town.

Diminutive lakes had formed in the hollows close by the walk during the downpour which had preceded the dawn. The water-soaked ground had given up many wire-like earthworms which had crawled onto the pavement searching for safety, only to be trampled by clumsy adults or mischievous, curious, and sometimes cruel children. The harmless victims of the powerful.

Steve breathed deeply of the brisk, fresh air. He stopped only now and then to observe, to touch, or to smell the objects of beauty that lined his path through the park and into the town.

He stopped only once to talk to anyone. That was when old Mrs. Bowers came out onto her porch to speak to the young man who always took time to pause and chat with her and tell her how beautiful her petunias were or how nice she looked in her new hat. He always noticed.

There was happiness in his heart and beauty in his soul. Later no one could think of any time when he had ever been cruel or unkind. His words were always praise; his thoughts sincere; his footsteps determined; and his mind, clear of rubbish, and a receptacle for the useful and the good. "He was not *too* nice; not *too* perfect; not *too* flattering. He was loved." These were the things said of him during the days following the incident.

Little Charlie had gone flying into the street to retrieve the ball that he had been bouncing monotonously on the sidewalk while his father backed the car from the garage to take him to school. The man wasn't aware that anyone was in his path until he felt the sickening thud of steel on flesh. But he hadn't hit his son. Charlie was safely sprawled on the lawn where he had been pushed by the alert, agile Steve. The tragedy was that there had been only time for one body to be thrust to safety.

Later two elderly ladies could be overheard talking in lowered tones. "It's too bad—he was so young—he had his life before him."

"No, his life was full, as full as another fifty years could have made it. He knew beauty, he had compassion—he said—my hat was pretty."

BELCH OF THE PAST

ROGER STEPHENS

My last drink from the old cup.

In years gone by I kept that old symbol of lost hope;

I clung to a virtue turned into a curse.

I washed and the water changed into dirt.

The blood remained on a blemished hand.

A wicked heart stayed in emotional stress.

A breast heaved though the air was fresh.

The stars glittered only for the happy men.

The last drop tasted as bad as the first.

NEVER

DONNA MINCEY

Never look into a pair of blue eyes,
And meet the smile within,
Never answer to their calling,
For that would surely be a sin.

Never run a laughing
In the fields on a summer night,
Never with fair hair beside you,
Fair hair shining in the moonlight.

Never go a-flying
Swooping from a height—
Never imitate a firefly,
Lest you be extinguished like their light.

Never take a lover's hand,
And skip off happily into the field;
Never fly away together,
For then your fate is sealed.

Never let a sweetheart
Lead you off by the hand,
Never run again as children
Playing in a moonlit land.

These are the things elders
Will advise to you,
But I tell you only
Do what your heart tells you to.

Always take your lover's hand,
Always smile at him,
And if he fails to stay with you,
Still you'll smile again.

MY SISTER SAW A WITCH

MARY KATHERINE NOLAN

I cannot remember when I first saw the queer old lady of our valley. However, I remember vividly the first time my sister saw her.

The summer shower was over. The trees, the grass, and the mountains looked like emeralds. A glance at the sun told me that it was late and that I must hurry. Leaving my sister to play beside a fresh, shallow stream of water, I went to the orchard to gather June apples for a pie. Having filled my bucket, I stood for a moment and listened to the frogs croaking along the bank of the lazy creek. Then I moved on.

Suddenly a blood-curdling scream stopped me momentarily in my tracks and engulfed me in a wave of fear. I did not think there were snakes around this time of year.

Gaining command of my feet, I dropped the bucket and bolted across the orchard in the direction of the stream, where I had left my small sister.

In a worn path above the trickling stream of water, she stood as if petrified, her eyes blued to the slight figure trudging up the mountain road. Shaking her gently, I asked, "What's wrong?"

"A witch! A witch!" she cried.

Then I turned to look at the queer old lady moving slowly up the road and understood how a child could easily imagine the woman to be a witch.

Her manner of dress was a frequent topic of discussion among the village women. Today she presented a surprising likeness to the weird pictures of witches which we associate with Hallowe'en. The soft, summer wind caught the wide brim of her tattered, black hat and sent it flapping like wings of a bat in flight. Her ankle-length, dark, ragged coat whirled and then soared out behind. The weight of the load which she carried caused her to hunch forward.

With faltering steps she moved on and suddenly disappeared behind tall pine trees.

Then my sister stopped her loud protesting. Half of the neighborhood had, by this time, collected to see who had been murdered. Red-faced, I explained the situation and with a chuckle each went his own way.

Relieved, but embarrassed and a little angry, I took my sister's hand and silently we marched toward the house.

"Mad at me, Sissie?" she inquired, looking earnestly up into my face.

"No, Jamie, but did you have to scream like a little wildcat?"

She looked at her feet for a minute; then looking very serious, replied, "Well, next time, Sissie, I'll try to scream just a little bit."

TEARDROPS ON THE WIND

DONNA MINCEY

My cabin is empty,
Dust lies on the floor,
My flower is a rank weed,
Crossed with a dusty spore,
And by one rusty hinge
Is sagging my door.

My garden of flowers,
Roses, pansies, and columbine,
Are scraggly and choked
By the morning glory vine,
And bear no resemblance
To what used to be mine.

My sweet little bird
That sang in its cage
Is gone to the sunset,
A withered heap, like my Bible page,
That is cracked and yellowed
And crumbles with age.

My stove is pieces
Covered with red
That comes of age.
The termites have eaten my bed,
And the cabin is tumbled,
With no place for a weary head.

My books are dusty
And covered with pollen,
So they still lie
Where they have fallen
Since I went from my hill,
To sleep in the valley below,
And all in the sunset is still.

NIGHT STORM

JERRY TAYLOR

It is night—a stormy night.

The house, buried alive among the trees, sits melancholily on its dank foundation. The door, weatherbeaten and paintstreaked, gapes open in a death yawn. Broken-paned windows and a crumbling chimney add to the all-over death pallor of the scene.

Ancient tree druids dance their ritual of death in the screaming wind while the darkening shadows turn the hollow trunks into living ghouls. A bolt of lightning streaks across the sky, piercing the blackness with unholy light. The thunder ghost clanks his heavy chains across the grave-dark sky.

Thick drops of clammy liquid beat down upon the collapsing roof. Another shaft of blazing, white heat hurtles through the sky. One of the black druids cracks in pain and topples to the ground, while the thunder beats its death drums above. The body lies surrounded by its mates, with the dripping rain thudding unceasingly on its unfeeling hulk. The wind, howling its grief cry into the night, surges with mingled emotions. As it passes through the jagged glass tooth of an upstairs window, the cry of the wind becomes a living shriek that screams "terror" through the rooms.

Violently, the storm rages on—with relentless energy—into its own death throes. Pitching the rain into every corner of each musty, tomblike room, it sends spasms of lightning periodically among the writhing ghostly druids. In one last concerted effort, the storm crashes a shaft of brittle lightning directly into the dejected house and the thunder rumbles ominously just above the swaybacked roof.

Suddenly, the violence ends and the storm settles into a whisper. The pounding rain subsides into a breathless mist as the thunder and lightning cower behind the clouds. The tree spectres, so frightening in the black storm, now wave their bare arms gently in a rocking, crooning lullaby.

The wet, broken windows of the shadowy house blink with the reflection of the rising sun and the creaking door floats open in an early-rising yawn.

The storm is over.

It is day.

MY COMPANION

MAVIS CURRY

My companion and I paused beside the decaying mailbox and looked behind us at the long narrow dusty road over which we had come. Long, irregular, snake-like lines darkened the dust in the road as gnarled and stalwart trees began to cast their pale shadows. While we rested, my companion sat with his head in his hands and aimlessly looked at his feet. His matted, black, and graying hair came almost to his collar. Dark half-moons were under his eyes, and extended lines ran through his face. His black coat, that hung loosely about him, was traced with green mold.

"Amos Seems," I said, reaching up and running my fingers over the name on the wooden mailbox.

I looked about for some other evidence of human existence, and my eyes descended the steep slope down into a hollow, across a small meandering stream, where a small white house was set back among the bushes.

The sudden darkening of the sky and furiousness of wind in the trees made me look at the sky. I turned to my silent companion.

"A storm's coming. We'd better go down there and see if we can get shelter for the night," I said.

He got slowly to his feet.

When we were about halfway down the slope, the wailing of a child came from the direction of the house.

"That child must really be angry," I remarked, attempting to laugh, knowing all along that it was the wind causing the wail.

After we crossed the stream, I noticed my companion's steps were slower. He did not seem to be in any hurry to get into the shelter of the house.

The path which led up to the house was overgrown with hanging weeds, which pulled and tugged at our legs. The house had an unkempt appearance and the windows seemed to be sightless eyes staring blankly at us. The steps creaked under our feet and the porch howled a protest as we walked to the door. I raised my hand to knock on the door but stopped short as my companion spoke.

"There's no need to knock. It's empty."

Something in his voice made my hand tremble on the door knob. Suddenly, the door creaked on its hinges and opened.

The room before us was empty except for two chairs by the fireplace and a broken-down table standing in one corner.

We stepped inside. The wind blew the door shut behind us. On the outside the rain began to pound down and cold wind seeped around us from the cracks in the floor. I broke up the table and built a fire. All the time I noticed that my companion was watching me strangely. His eyes seemed to burn in his head. He probably thinks that I'm not very sociable after traveling with him all day and not even asking his name or telling him mine, I thought and turned to him.

"Looks like we're here for the night," I said.

He didn't reply.

"What did you say your name was?" I asked.

Still no reply. Outside the lightning flashed and pieces of broken sticks and leaves hit the house. I looked toward the window and saw wet leaves sticking to the panes.

"I'm a salesman," I said. "I've started back to the county seat to order a new supply of materials. This seems to be a good community for a salesman." Seeing he wasn't even listening to me, I asked, "Wonder what the people were like who lived here? Did you know them by any chance?"

"Amos Seems was a kindly man, but he stayed much to himself. Not many people liked him. His wife left him because he couldn't buy the things she wanted. He's been dead for a long time. He's buried up there in the cemetery where I got with you," he said.

"I could have sworn that I heard a child cry as we were coming down the slope," I said, feeling better that my companion had decided to talk.

"Ten years ago tonight Amos's wife killed their child. Folks say that you can hear it cry in the evening on every anniversary of its death. I've come here every year to see if I can hear it, but I never have," he said.

I pulled a chair to the fire and sat watching the fire crack and burn. I noticed my companion had fallen asleep. The rain still pounded on the roof.

I didn't believe in haunted houses. During all the years that I had been a traveling salesman, I'd heard tales of the supernatural but never gave any thought to them. From pure exhaustion, I dozed in my chair and kept thinking about haunted houses and my companion who was sleeping soundly beside me.

When I awoke my neck was stiff, which told me I had slept a long time. I looked over at my companion, but he wasn't in the chair. I stood up and looked around the room, but he was nowhere around.

I could still hear the rain on the roof, almost silent now, like a thousand whispering, unclear voices. The night was beginning to fade into a gray morning. I called out but received no answer. I went to the next room but stopped short in the doorway. Lying on a broken-down bed was a skeleton of a small child. Folded carefully at its feet was a black coat—the coat of my companion. On the floor at the foot of the bed there was something written in the dust. By the dim light from the window I read the word—it was "AMOS."

I turned and ran out of the house, where a gray and foggy morning enveloped me.

FEAR

GEORGE WOLFFORD

Go underground
With the snakes and the rats and the dead.
Be frightened.
Everyone else is frightened the first time that he
goes down alone,
Hearing only the silence, feeling the dampness of the
mine, sensing non-existent beings all around
him.
First you must get used to the feeling,
Then you can dig coal.

SEPTEMBER

SHARON BROWN

The loveliness of September has come.
There is a touch of frost in early mornings,
A melody in the air,
A schoolday,
A football game,
Hot chocolate in the early mornings,
An autumn love.
September.

PUGNAVISSE

ROGER STEPHENS

"To have fought," the phrase runs,
The regrets of a man with empty guns.
"To have won," the line tells
The sorrow of a man who wasted his shells.
Such a joke to have fought,
A bigger joke to have lost.
Yet the man who won
Will forever grip a gun.

LOVE

RAY E. WILLIAMS

Love is a brutal thing not to be bought or sold,
Love is sweet, love is bitter,
Love is good, love is bad,
Love can never find a cure,
Love's a demon all its own.
Love—the will and inspiration,
Love—the will for life,
Love—the will for heights attained,
Love—the will and cause of birth,
Why love, the will and wish for death?

LIKE DREAMS

BETTY WHITE

The dreamer wakes and sees the dawn,
but all too soon the dawn is gone
like his dream.

Our senses wake and feel the light,
but gone is the struggle for the right
like a dream.

Life is a series of hopes and dreams;
it makes us aware of its subtle schemes
which are blown away.

We live but an hour in the indefinite plan;
then like schemes, dreams, water and sand,
we are blown away.

BESIDE THE SEA

BETTY OGDEN

I stood beside the ocean
And looked into the sea,
And lo, as far as I could look
The waters lay before me.
There I saw the rolling waters
And waves of ocean spray;
There I saw the ocean
With its glory and array.
Then I fell to my knees
And threw my arms to the sea,
And cried,
"What beside a being so great as this
Are little people like you and me?"

VISION

RAY E. WILLIAMS

In a gay and glowing manner,
I saw her standing in Enchanting Manor;
A well of joy before me flowed
As her face alighted and glowed;
How gaily bright her dark eyes shone
In my thoughts, I was alone.

Immediately I placed her upon a golden altar
To worship her and never falter;
Standing tiptoe to set her higher,
Down she came rushing, crushing
Out the infant life for evermore.





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